The Richness of Art Education
Howard Cannatella

This book is intended for anyone interested in knowing more about arts education. It makes a daring contribution to the subject in a clear, pragmatic, committed and ambitious way. The book discusses thoroughly the theory and practice of arts education and what it means to be a teacher of art. It is a powerful and inspiring account of the challenges of teaching in the arts that will appeal to anyone in the teaching profession. With clarity and engagement the Richness of Arts Education addresses what it means to be a teacher in the arts. Familiarity and knowledge of teaching is checked by the constant relevant examples that the book critically explores. The book rethinks some of the real ground of teaching in the arts and encourages a deeper understanding of them. Primary and secondary teachers, college and university teachers and policy makers will find this book formidable. It is a book for today and tomorrow.
The Richness of Art Education
Scope
This series maps the emergent field of educational futures. It will commission books on the futures of education in relation to the question of globalisation and knowledge economy. It seeks authors who can demonstrate their understanding of discourses of the knowledge and learning economies. It aspires to build a consistent approach to educational futures in terms of traditional methods, including scenario planning and foresight, as well as imaginative narratives, and it will examine examples of futures research in education, pedagogical experiments, new utopian thinking, and educational policy futures with a strong accent on actual policies and examples.
The Richness of Art Education

Howard Cannatella
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PREFACE

With the renewed interest in the importance to all our futures of creativity and innovation, there’s been much public discussion in recent years about art education and its special value – education to art and education through art, to adapt Herbert Read’s famous distinction. But the tone of voice in these public debates has usually been rhetorical, and the emphasis has tended to be on advocacy rather than research, assertion rather than argument, on unexamined assumptions.

The Richness of Art Education explores – with a wealth of examples from art, literature, philosophy and education – some deep perspectives on the distinctive contribution made by teachers of art: these perspectives include – in chronological order – ‘mimesis’ (from the ancient Greeks), ‘art as experience’, ‘art and general education’, ‘art and language games’, ‘the moral world of art education’ and ‘the individual vision’. What unites them, throughout the book, is Howard Cannatella’s seriousness of purpose, the clarity with which he presents each perspective, and his evident commitment to making them useful to practising teachers. The Richness of Art Education is in the end a guide to practice.

Those of us who teach in art rooms and art schools need this book. I wish it had been available when I was starting out.

PROFESSOR SIR CHRISTOPHER FRAYLING
OCTOBER 2008
INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to bring to life in a fresh and constructive way art education. It is a unique inquiry that examines some of the furtherance of teaching in the arts. Each chapter addresses an important issue about arts education and investigates some of the challenges of teaching that these issues raise. The theory and practice of the arts in education is covered throughout. Seminal figures have been chosen for their different understanding of arts education, whose respective thoughts have contributed something special, enduring and formidable. Their writings in general form part of the formative impulse of what is upstanding about arts education. The selected themes of the book are designed to enhance our sense of the particular and wider concerns that affect art teaching today, to offer more clarity about them and to spur further discussion. In this text, much is debated about the world of teaching in the arts, its cultural work, understanding, value, and daily faculties. With attention being paid on the one hand to primary, secondary and undergraduate teaching and on the other to policy and theory in education, the book is an attempt to reclaim and reinforce the relevance of the arts in our schools, colleges and universities.

Investigated are ideas concerning the traditional, novel, contemporary, and befitting notions of art in education. In teaching ways the book discusses: knowledge production in the arts, morality in the arts, meaning in arts, the politics of art, rules of art, the nature of art, the importance of art, the ordinariness of art, the language of art, the making of art, children’s art, representation in art, expression in art, perception, cognition, imagination and the body in art, understanding in art, experience in art, the dissatisfaction of art education, student centeredness in art, the syllabus in art, the philosophy of art, the social and the other in art, aesthetic education and human becoming in art. In offering a critique of some major figures and their themes, the book demonstrates the rewards of art education in a creative, intellectual and practical fashion. These chapters represent some of the most exciting, vital, and finest work on arts education. A sense of history and a sense of the present are discussed to serve the teaching of art. The depth and variety of the topics involved suggest something of the lustre of arts education that may further suggest that the arts, as John White puts it, are one of the inexhaustible features of human well-being (White, 1995).

All of the figures chosen have conceptualised and expanded the theory of learning and teaching in the arts in ways that have applied relevance for contemporary practice in art education at all levels. A few of the names on first sight may seem an unusual inclusion but I am optimistic that by reading about them here one will feel there is justification for their insertion in this work. Not just the regular and normal, but also the perplexing, moving, distinctive, and sophisticated acts of art practice in education are debated as well. Attention is paid to the poetic, performing, and visual arts. Between the chapters there exist various overlaps, agreements, connections, and tensions as well. Yet this is a book that is not dominated by a
single thesis; rather it canvases a wide range of different perspectives that seek to wrestle with the complexity of art education from substantially different points of view. Although the list of renowned figures is short in number, I have wanted to heed the warning of Francesco Cordasco (1987, p. vii) of producing a “biographical digest without any scholarly underpinnings and without any real assistance” to the teacher.

What is good about the arts is provoked and questioned throughout the book from a variety of positions. Some of the common teaching input that is essential to the success of the arts in education is imparted. Whatever chapter one chooses to read first, each renowned thinker isolates issues poignant to the profession of art education. The book does not aim to convey a prescribed body of knowledge and skills for the teaching of art, but it does attempt to convey some of its specialised understanding, verity, and erudition. Like a journey, this volume takes us on a voyage to re-examine some of the landscape of arts education. It is a study that gives an overview of a few of the well-meaning benchmarks in arts education. What these writers bring to the table of art education cannot be dismissed lightly because each one of them has something to say of special value which challenges us. It is hoped that the reader will grasp a sense of the validating power and practicum of arts education. My thoughts on each theme, is an attempt to open up, state, and discover the industry, prudent truths and analysis that make art education such a primary subject in education generally.

The reader will discern in the book how art education is engaging, enlarging, and redefining its professional practices. This inquiry reviews in more ways than one, how art education, is an essential part of human flourishing. Each chapter is not intended to give a comprehensive account of the breadth of each figure’s work but rather to act as a guide to some of their thinking which it is hoped can be used to assist teaching in art education and decide policy. As Marion Richardson (1948, p11–12) mentions in relation to her reservations about her art teacher training course: “It could not be that the mere ability to copy crabs’ claws, bathroom taps, umbrellas, ivy leaves, or even the casts from the antique to which these elementary things were the prelude, constituted art”. We have all experienced a similar doubt perhaps when teaching art, and in reading this book there can be an ennobling interchange about such thoughts that represent a kind of self-respect and modesty that is a reflection of oneself as one is. When thoughts push up from below they can have a marked effect on one’s teaching practice. The thinkers in this book are particularly good at capitalising on such thoughts. They are all practitioners and theorists of vision, tenacity, artistry, intellectual force, political awareness, unerring kindness, psychological acuteness, extensive teaching experience, and comprehensive knowledge.

The space of learning in art, its teaching methods and the lives of those who learn from it are further concerns of this manuscript. I trust that the words spoken here will make the reader feel that as a teacher in the arts one is not alone, that the book gives real comfort, joy, and precise challenges for teaching and that it establishes that the present history of art education is potent, creative, curious,
purposeful, caring, erudite and pertinent to the world and a measure of it. In an uneasy world, this is a book that dares to think differently about art education in sensitive, penetrative, and expansive ways.

HOWARD CANNATELLA CERT ED, MA RCA, PHD
CHAPTER 1

MIMESIS AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Plato and Aristotle

“Why should man be obeyed more than any other animal? Is it because, as Plato answered Neocles, he alone of all animals can count? Or is it because he is the only animal that believes in gods? Or is it because he is the most imitative (for it is for this reason that he can learn)?” (Aristotle, 1984c, Book XXX, p. 1504).

Abstract

Ordinarily, if one is looking to find out exactly when and how art educational theory got started; if one is looking to find out what theory of art has had the biggest and longest effect on art education; if one wants to avoid the frivolous and the lightweight; if one has a yearning for depth and reliability; if one is searching for those whose thoughts on art in education have been substantial and if one feels it helps teaching to understand the subject theoretically and practically, then all these points taken together converge on Plato and Aristotle.

Introduction

This is the longest chapter in the book for the simple reason that Plato and Aristotle are two gigantic heavy weights in the field of art educational theory and practice. Their critical claims, though very different in kind, have been decisive for art education. Our investigation has three aims. Firstly, to outline a teaching perspective of mimesis with practical implications; secondly, to discuss Plato’s reservations concerning mimesis in art education; and thirdly, to justify why Aristotle’s approach has “elementary validity” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 97).

What specialised teaching knowledge of art does an art teacher need to have to go into a class or studio to teach children and adults? One branch of the teacher’s distinctive teaching knowledge in art education that we are going to discuss is the notion of mimesis. We may have forgotten the importance of mimesis in teaching, but in this chapter we are going to resurrect this concept in order to show its specialised knowledge and significance. While we all have our preferences—abstraction, constructionism, fauvism, romanticism, surrealism, technological art, post-modernism, rock, ballet, free dancing, or jazz. I believe that there are sound educational reasons why the teaching of mimesis in art education should be a necessary feature of the syllabus of art. However much we know about different art
movements, and however good we are at teaching their strengths, we cannot be teaching art properly without the inclusion of imitation in art.

Undoubtedly, imitation in art education has what some people strongly dislike about this practice: a traditional language of art. I believe we should not feel apologetic for this in the slightest because being part of a mimetic tradition gives art education a corpus like no other. We can trace this tradition back to one of its impulses in the famous Palaeolithic Lascaux Caves in France. The age of representation had begun when the artists in the Lascaux Caves and elsewhere influenced the course of history and the arena of art. The world we all live in realised long ago how it could usefully deploy artistic representations to create perspectives of different times and places. However dynamic art in the present is, we can still feel connections to past art because we can “feel the movement of life” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 116) in these works due to the doctrine of imitation as representation. The narrative of life constantly changes, but the realistic brilliance of imitation as representation has sought to move with it. Being part of a tradition of great achievement in art education with the irreplaceable Lascaux Caves to refer to, for example, does not necessarily mean that imitation in art has been unadventurous. Those who have taken this stand have not understood the compulsiveness, raison d’être, and life-serving significance of this tradition. We can also easily avoid the charge that mimesis is conservative thinking and any argument with it, when we can show how and why mimesis is coextensive with its past but is still in diverse ways constantly facing the present and the future (Gadamer, 1998, p. 9).

Few teachers would question this given the history of art teaching and the manner in which mimesis has developed. A random snapshot image of the present from different regions of the world might suggest that artists such as Paula Rego, R.B. Kitaj, Cindy Sherman, Alan Feltus, Andrea Martinelli, Ron Mueck, Philip Pearlstein, William Beckman, Jean-Luc Blanc, Liu Maoshan, Cheng Shifa, Xu Lele, Bao Chenchu, Alan Bennett, Czeslaw Milosz, Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke, and Seamus Heaney are all sharing, to various degrees, the art tradition of mimesis.

With the idea that mimesis involves a tradition in art we are indicating a way of how we can use it to our advantage in teaching. Having an illustrious tradition of imitation in art means we can enter the past, as in the case of the Lascaux Caves, but carry this past forward with the sensibilities of the present. The tradition is therefore kept alive albeit in a fashion that designates our own world in it today. This tradition involves in art education mimetically, four vital forces which we see present in the Lascaux Caves. The first is that we are nothing without a “memory and recollective appropriation” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 10). The second is the power of art to penetrate deeply into life to produce refined images of it. Third, we find the child’s “spirit lies in the ability to move within the horizon of an open future and an unrepeatable past” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 10). Fourth, the “nerve to get close enough for a collaboration to start” (Berger, 2002, p. 16).

Alden Nowlan’s poem, below, invites the kind of representation that Aristotle refers to in his Poetics, disclosing the human scale of life which elevates art education.
“She hugs me now, this retarded woman, and I hug her. We are brother and sister, father and daughter, mother and son, husband and wife. We are lovers. We are two human beings Huddled together for a little while by the fire In the Ice Age, two hundred thousand years ago” (Nowlan, 2004, p. 138–9).

The figurative, in a form that tells stories concerning people, their lives and their worlds, is an ancient one. In a letter that Joanne Gonzalez sent to the editor Neil Ashley about the poetry book Staying Alive, Joanne writes of her mother: “She is 90, and blind. I had just bought Staying Alive and began reading it to her. I do not exaggerate to say she was transformed. She asked to hold the book, and pressed it against her forehead. She chose life today because of your book” (Gonzalez, 2004, p. 20). Perhaps this is all the proof we need as teachers for the relevance of mimetic art and anyone who thinks this is not enough is missing something precious about humanity itself. Of course one might reply that a ninety-year-old woman is a very different person to a nine-year-old child, but any child can be rejuvenated by a story, poem, song, dance, or painting in exactly this way.

Being part of a historical tradition also means we can choose contemporary artists for teaching examples. The teacher does not need to go far to find revealing material of this sort for there are hundreds of short stories to be found in most school libraries with such Compulsive titles as: “The Rascally Cake,” “The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish,” “Scratch Scratch,” “The Wheels On the Bus,” “Bat Loves the Night,” “Captain Underpants,” “Dancing Dreams,” “The Killer Cat,” “Thomas Knew There Were Pirates Living in the Bathroom,” and “George’s Marvellous Medicine” which speak to us in mimetic ways of the drama of life. Whether it is Shakespeare’s Tempest, Francis Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden, L. M. Montgomery’s Anne of Green Gables, Helen Keller’s The Story of My Life or more recently Alan Bennett’s The History Boys, the issue of teaching imitation in art is also part of a culture that is changing. What can be learnt from Shakespeare and from more recent works like Anthony Horowitz’s Stormbreaker, Jacqueline Wilson’s Love Lessons, Louis Sachar’s Holes and Ted Hughes’ Iron Man can contribute to the mix of mimesis to make the culture of one’s own youth less of an issue for students. When ten-year-olds are learning in their school orchestra to play the theme tunes for Star Wars, James Bond, Harry Potter, the Pink Panther and the Simpsons, then the children can be inspired beyond their years. The playwright Alan Bennett in his diary for the film production of The History Boys writes: “The best moments in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things—which you had thought special and particular to you” (Bennett, 2006, p. xxi).

Teaching mimetically in art connects to the expressed manner representation and enactment portrays life. It can teach the student to become attuned with a past and a present: (1) “Without this historical sensibility we would probably be unable to perceive the precise compositional mastery displayed by earlier art” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 11). (2) Mimetic practice aims to help the student achieve representations
and enactments that are superior in perception. (3) To construct art so that it displays understanding and meaning in recognisable and universal ways (an Aristotelian point we will come back to discuss). (4) Mimesis unfolds naturally from the child and is important for their well-being and learning, as Aristotle compellingly writes in Book Four of his Poetics. (5) Because it is part of a tradition that has been enormously creative over the centuries, there is a substantial body of practice with plenty of material to draw from for the teacher, such as the unmistakable imagery of Botticelli, Rembrandt, Piero della Francesa, Picasso, or Francis Bacon.

Now, Plato was aware that mimesis as a theory was in the making at the time he wrote the Republic (approximately 360 BC). He contributed enormously to the debate and is singled out as the “first Greek thinker to explore the idea of mimetic art in a theoretically extensive and probing manner” (Halliwell, 2002, p. 37). Plato’s arguments against imitation in art remain as salient as ever. While there is more than meets the eye with Plato, no one has mounted a serious criticism against art education as severe as Plato’s theory and it would surely be a sign of neglect, if not stupidity, if art education ignored it. We have to grasp something of how correctly, and incorrectly, Plato perceives art in education mimetically because if we do not we are always open to his challenge that there is an inherent feebleness about art education.

Why do we still value mimesis in art education? This may also be due to the fact that its productive knowledge has shown itself to be versatile and incorrigible for the world. In the hands of the common and the most talented alike it has touched people’s lives deeply through the centuries and continues to do so. It was not just the rich, famous, or intellectual elite that came to see the plays of Sophocles or Shakespeare. It is natural, as Elaine Scarry mentions, to want to replicate and reproduce what the eyes see as beautiful (Scarry, 2000). In alphabetical order only and to various degrees acting, architecture, crafts, dance, drama, fashion, film, graphic design, literature, music, photography, poetry, product design, and sculpture have all advanced artistically because of different conceptions of mimetic art thinking and teaching. “Mimesis, in all its variations, has quite simply proved to be the most long-lasting, widely held and intellectually accommodating of all theories of art in the West” (Halliwell, 2002, p. 5–6). Yet, let us not think that the power of mimesis rests on its flexibility and versatility alone, neither of which is worth very much if we cannot feel the mettle of its seduction influencing the fabric of our human becoming.

To get us feeling au fait with the concept of mimesis in art education we will start with a sketch of the factors that affect the pedagogy of it. Some of these points will be expanded later in the chapter. With this background knowledge up front, I feel we will be in a better position to then take account of Plato and Aristotle in our final sections.
Depending on the type of media involved, the teaching of mimesis is guided by enactment or representational traits. In the case of drama, enactment is requisite, and in painting, representation is required. Certainly, a gamut of differences can exist between drama, painting, poetry, music, and sculpture but Aristotle in his *Poetics* shows how enactment and representation can intertwine. Enactment involves student performances in drama, dance or music. Mimetic performances are enactments with the relevant resemblance and drama of life. We can see drama in dance as we can see drama in a play. Reading poetry in a class will sometimes require a performance that is spoken with a rhythm and an inflexion akin to the style and meaning of the poem. Traditionally, painting and sculpture are not thought of as performances *per se*. In fine art practice images appear frozen in gestural and inspired representative ways. This might be a Christmas scene, a game of rugby, or two lovers kissing, a horse, an apple, or building sand castles on the beach. Recently, sculptural installations and video art recordings have begun using performances as a way to extend further the vernacular of art. These points aside, enactment may be depicting and representing events just as much as a poem, painting, or sculpture can.

Whatever is going to be an imitative project for students to tackle in an art class or studio, we can be certain that it must exhibit a “reference to or substitute for the real existence of something” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 35) in a picture, image, or as a performance. Imitation expresses realism as art and not realism, as Cora Diamond (1996, p. 40) explicates, simply by deduction, by statistics or by meta-analysis. We recognise mimesis in art in perceptual ways. Mimesis in art education exploits the expressible in enactment and representation (Gadamer, 1998, p. 96) by drawing from the student’s contact and the life they lead. In one sense nothing has changed. Art education is still concerned with events in the world as it was in the past, and as Plato and Aristotle surmised in earlier times, mimesis then and now follows a tradition of imitating life. This means that mimetic representations-enactments in art education re-create imaginatively true-to-life experiences, events, sounds, and images. From Plato, I take it that a mimetic representation-enactment is modelled on the incident it is made to look like, and from Aristotle I take it also that a mimetic representation-enactment relates further to “this person being so-and-so” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 4, p. 2318). The imitative process of art education that Gadamer detects in relation to Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*, can provoke the revealing, unconcealing, and manifesting compulsion of existence, as well as the concealing and sheltering aspects of life (Gadamer, 1998, p. 34). Homer’s *Iliad* is one example of this art and the seventeenth-century painting by Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* may be another.

Mimetic practice in art education “should not violate the laws of probability” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 94), and, as Gadamer exegetically explains, representation traditionally had the belief in the idealising capacity of the ‘imitation of nature’. The Greek sculptor Polykleitos idealised his figures but would we say the same for Sophocles’ *Antigone*? Idealising or not, art education mimitically demands “legibility” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 96), so that the student’s artwork becomes ‘readable’. We can say that our student produced different mimetic representations-enactments of their
cat and did so through a range of songs, paintings, poems, sculptures, acting, dance movements, and stories. Imitation of nature, imitative realism, cultural realism, modernist realism, native realism, post-modern realism and historical styles of representation and enactment, for example, may serve to suggest all kinds of comparable notions of mimetic creativity in art education.

Playing, reading, having conversations and dialogue, forming friendships, completing assignments, helping others, and going on visits, adventures and journeys are the kinds of experiences that extend how children encounter themselves and the world. We encounter ourselves when “the world is what we see” (Merleau-Ponty, 2000, p. 3). These commonplace encounters, however variegated they may be, reverberate with the reveries of childhood (Bachelard, 1971). The construction process of art in education begins from this world and the characters, incidents and journeys that provoke such abundant pictures full of life, relate in part from “the joy of recognition” (Bachelard, 1971, p. 99) which comes from understanding the recognition (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 4). A misrepresentation would be a performance or product that we could not recognise relevantly ‘as’ something; the “knowledge that it implies” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 99). Mimetic construction is the result of the child’s work and is not something that exists in the world before the child creates it in representative ways (Nehamas, 1982, p. 62). Mimesis in art education is synonymous with recognition but these recognitions, as Aristotle enumerated in his Poetics are produced by a poetic culture.

Our teacher asks: ‘Who can recognise what this story is about?’ ‘Can you recognise in the picture the big bad wolf?’ Our teacher says: ‘children, let us see if we can dance with the movement of a tree in mind’. ‘When we recognise that this is a story about rabbits can we also recognise how it is being delicately portrayed?’ ‘It is difficult to see what you are depicting here, Ian, and this makes it difficult for me to recognise what it is’. Our student might say: ‘I recognise where I have gone wrong’, ‘I recognise that I need to improve my dancing technique’, ‘I recognise that the resemblance is not very good here’, ‘I recognise that if I mix blue and yellow, I will make green’ and ‘I recognise what this is about, miss’. Recognition, Aristotle proposes, leads to understanding and “we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art” (Aristotle, 1984, book 4, p. 2318). When children dress up and disguise themselves (Gadamer, 1998, p. 98) we are not supposed to see the child but what the child represents in the disguise “recognition confirms and bears witness to the fact that mimetic behaviour makes something present” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 99). Another reason for “the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning—gathering the meaning of the things” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 4, p. 2318). Children contrive what so-and-so is by noting what is real about so-and-so, even when it is a pantomime performance of Jack and the Bean Stalk. The knowledge production that goes into making what so-and-so is becomes a factor in the child’s learning process since it determines, as Aristotle declares (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 2), the realism to represent people, for example, as either better or worse. Therefore, one of the mimetic teaching issues in art education “consists precisely in the recognition of the represented in the representation” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 99).
How do children learn to recognise and understand by imitating? By the time they come to school, children already have an informed understanding of representation and enactment. In make-believe activities they will substitute a stick for a horse, a cardboard box for a rocket, they can produce a painting of their rabbit at home and can possibly imitate the voice of Harry Potter. When the child substitutes a stick for a horse, how is the visual resemblance operating? Alan Goldman (2003, p. 198) remarks that visual resemblance can operate in all sorts of ways. How does a stick resemble a horse? It is in the social acting and playing that a stick can be used to express a horse with a rider on top. The relevant resemblance, as Goldman contends, cannot be a stick corresponding to a horse, as a stick and a horse have very little resemblance in common. What convinces the teacher of a relevant resemblance here is how the stick is used in a performance to present a horse with a rider on top. We see the stick as a horse with a rider on top because the child’s acting mimics imaginatively some of the actions and features that are fictionally real enough to be perceived as a horse with a rider on top.

Mimetic practice is constrained by recognition, resemblance, and familiarity. This involves having a realistic attitude about the knowledge production of art and its effect. Rather like Aristotle, Diamond insists that a story is “unrealistic if the plot proceeds by a series of improbable events” (Diamond, 1996, p. 41). The mimetic construction focuses on what Aristotle thought as the probable inclination of what something should look like or be performed ‘as’. We judge what something should look like or be performed as in art education, when the child’s “product has a special nature of its own” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 125). As previously stated, it is not just the ‘knowledge that it implies’ but whether mimetically it has a ‘special nature of its own’. It must have its own style and vision, its own way of playing. A child’s or adult’s mimetic realisation that so-and-so is a horse would have to have a significance beyond simply recognising that it had four legs, a head and a tail. Franz Marc’s Red Horses (1911) and Blue Horse (1911) are examples of the elevation that Aristotle speaks of in his Poetics where recognition is being transformed into something which has a defined and superior poetic sense to it. Marc’s horses express a different kind of lushness, coolness, and relaxed stance which explicate a primitive and rhythmic representing image of them.

Teaching imitation in art aims to reveal “precisely the real essence of things” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 99). Here are some examples of how this might be produced:

1. “Sheep have an entirely different feeling from, say, horses, or cats or dogs” (Moore and Hedgecoe, 1986, p. 282). (2) “We pass trees hundreds of times, but ask someone to draw a tree—how much have they seen” (Moore and Hedgecoe, 1986, p. 158). (3) “One might ask why in this drawing does he make that black behind the shoulder; the reason is that it forces the shoulder out from the background” (Caro, 2006, p. 116). (4): “As is common in Moore’s life drawings, here a low viewpoint gives greater weight to the legs and lower torso, and much less to the girlish head” (Stallabrass, 2006, p. 104). A fifth example, is how mimetically to support in teaching the fact that a child can look at a robot carpet cleaner and think that it has a hidden death ray in it. Something tells me the child is right and that this
too may be part of the essence of the robot’s magical power when an object haunts
the child in fantastical self-imposed ways.

“Recognition, as understood by Aristotle, presupposes the continuing existence
of a binding tradition that is intelligible to all and in which we can encounter
ourselves” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 100). This ‘binding tradition’ that Gadamer is speaking
of here simply means the tradition of producing meaningful recognitions. The
second part of this quote suggests that the teacher should explore with the students
how they want to reveal their world so that their imitations are recognisable images
of the world but are more than trivial enactments and representations of it.

Our culture introduces us to legends, fantasies, fairy tales, underworlds, quests,
larger-than-life characters, terrible things, heroic deeds, ritual, magic, witches, pirates,
dragons, and unicorns. The Arabian Nights, Beowulf, Robin Hood, King Arthur and
the Knights of the Round Table, Doctor Who, The Odyssey by Homer and various
works in Hans Christian Andersen, Roald Dahl, J.K. Rowling, Jill Murphy, William
Blake, Brueghel the Elder, J.R. Tolkien, Dean Swift, Zbigniew Herbert, Miguel de
Cervantes, Egyptian, Mayan and African art offer dreaming perspectives which
seem to confirm why Aristotle thought, namely that art is more elevated truth than
history is.

The critical powers of art admonishing the tragic existence of life as we encounter
it can promote well-being, as Nietzsche argued in the Birth of Tragedy. Aristotle in
his Poetics explains at some length why tragedy is no ordinary pleasure because it
hinges on a spectacle which transmits an immutable understanding of the world.
Full of passion, sentiment, experience, horror, struggle and healing, tragedy in art
education invites us to consider how destructive, unreal, painful, and devious we
all are. Theatre as staged drama “may be painful to see” (Aristotle, 1984, Book 4,
p. 2318) due to the devastation the play portrays. The representation of which can
still be enjoyable because of its insight into events and views that connect to the
action of the persons concerned. We can become animated by the play’s realistic
presentation when it is never mean or debased.

Most representation in Classic Greek sculpture is an attempt to idealise the
human body. For the sculptor, grasping the ideal through the senses in figurative
ways in order to convey what was then thought of as an ultimate conception of
being in the world, meant exploring representational images of self-control,
serenity, harmony, ‘perfection’, and the human form as a thing of beauty. The ideal
form is triumphantly schematised into an ethical ideal of heroic bodies, symbolising
self-determination, worldliness, physical union, spirit, and freedom. These traits we
see exhibited further in the work of Dürer, Michelangelo, Raphael, Poussin, Delacroix,
Ingres, Matisse, and Cézanne. In other ways, too, we are touched by how Henry
Moore idealises mother and child images in his sculptures to such an extent that we
are humbled by them. Hegel remarks that one of the issues of art as idealisation is
to convert the “visible surface into an eye, which is the seat of the soul and brings
the spirit into appearance” (Hegel, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 153). It is a common feature of
all the arts to idealise and children are particularly good at representing larger-than-
life images.
We encounter ourselves sometimes behaving romantically, which we often view as idealised love. When children paint a flower or a bird, when they dance to a song or when they write about their sister or brother, mother or father, their dog or a friend, what passes in such representations may be exactly this kind of idealised love. A world of feeling and inner life, as Hegel put it in his *Lectures on Fine Art*. The Romantic Movement is often credited with championing a world of spontaneity, liberty, passion, delight, affection, imagination, emotion, sensuality, and personal conviction. Some noted examples in less than puritanical ways are in the world of literature, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Charlotte, Anne and Emily Brontë, Byron, Mary Shelly, Keats; and among the painters Turner, Géricault, Goya, and Casper David Friedrich. Romanticism continues to influence countless poets, prose writers, painters, and dancers today.

Humour is important to children’s intellectual and moral well being. It comforts them and can arouse an exalting and enlightened self. We know that the funniest stories are sometimes the best stories to discuss with children. A funny story may be poignant and absurd at the same time. The generous, vigorous, peculiar, bizarre, strange, silly, courageous, kind, challenging, intelligent, and fantastical nature of these stories represents the splendid spirit of children. A cheerful confidence can come from reading stories that reflect the vexations and imaginations of childhood. Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean’s book *The Day I Swapped my Dad for Two Goldfish* is an example of children’s imagination and behaviour that has other children laughing in socially important ways. Roald Dahl stories are deliberately modest in style: plain and domestic. What is true of his stories is that they are full of astonishing, grotesque, small and gigantic figures. Tongue-in-cheek remarks, idyllic and absurd incidents, chicanery, innocence, fallibility, and comical characterisations are incisive features of his work.

We further encounter ourselves in art education through the production of ‘realist’ work. This idea concerns how life appears in the world to be as it is observed. John Dewey’s *Art as Experience* emphasises some of these qualities. The work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Émile Zola, Mark Twain, George Orwell, Anne Frank and many of the writers already mentioned in this chapter manifest this quality. Realism refers sometimes to the surface appearance of things, the perception of things and the event or actual incidents that happen in everyday existence. To recognise what it is a picture of, argues, Crispin Sartwell (1992, p. 354), is to note the realism in it.

Our modern urban culture with its consumerist lifestyles, politics, and the entertainment world can become the inspiration for a teenager’s poem, dance, craft, product design or sculpture piece. In some ways, pop art is what most children are familiar with when, for example, they exchange the latest fantasy graphic game cards in the playground, the computer games they play, the text messages they send, their dress sense, the food they eat, the TV and films they watch, the posters they have on their bedroom walls and the books they read. Pop art is youth culture: colourful, fashion conscious, loud and well adapted to the pleasures of life. Vibrant and trendsetting pop art can command a strong sensory vividness to reflect back on the social strata and politics in contemporary society.
In all of the categories above, children portray themselves in art education as the subjects they are. It is not uncommon in art education to combine realism with fantasy, or idealism with realism, or further still, romanticism, idealism, realism, tragedy and science fiction into a single story. How would we classify Otto Dix: as simply a realist painter? How would we classify Ted Hughes’s book *Iron Man*: as science fiction or realist work? Would we describe Shakespeare as a romantic, satirist, realist, idealist, tragedian, or fantasist? His *Tempest* shows signs of all these qualities. Likewise, the Swedish painter Carl Larsson painted events that appear realistic, symbolic, romantic, idealised, and with figures sometimes in mythological costumes. He would deliberately add a cat, flowers, a teapot, colours, and lighting as he saw fit to do so. Larsson’s style of painting extenuated or softened the naturalistic appearances in his artwork’s romantic, simple and domesticated narrative scenes. His paintings tell stories and they are dramatic, arranged, and culturally conditioned.

What we can learn from a Chinese, abstract, or decorative painting style can have an important affect on the knowledge production of mimetic construction in art education. The tradition of mimesis in art education demands creativity and from the Lascaux Caves onwards, representation and enactment continues to be receptive to multidimensional influences. Life’s realities are constantly being tested, rejected, reinterpreted and developed. Mimetically, different styles in realism, romanticism, idealism, tragedy, and humour which were originally only found in a single culture are now spread widely across many cultures. The very synergy of which has helped to infuse more inter-cultural exchanges that have assisted the cross-pollinating of art forms to further open up new energetic critiques in which to express everyday events, freedoms, experiences, and meanings. However we hit upon ideas for new mimetic production in art, we may still be ready to absorb into the artwork some historical and universal claims but now in terms of a contemporary spirit that can speak in many different self-accounting ways. The world is more open to ideas, dynamic movement, imagination, and experiences than ever before.

Some might take the view that in art education “the more closely the appearance of the picture surface approaches the appearance of what it depicts” (Budd, 1996, p. 45) in the world, the more closely this fictive depiction in the picture will relate to our actual perceptions and experiences of it. The picture is supposedly analogous to what it depicts. This process can claim to mirror the real fictively. Mirroring the real fictively in this manner is not altogether appropriate for art education. A depiction like this, as Budd states, is aiming for a presentation that is a “duplicate of the model” (Nehamas, 1982, p. 62). It would be impossible to accept mere duplication as original, and just as hard to accept it as elevated representation. Students’ perceptions are being tightly controlled and governed in duplication exercises. The real as fictive representation is subject to technical expertise rather than aesthetic and imaginative expertise. In this process we are asked to put aside any social, ethical, political, poetic, and emotional reactions. Nothing new or unexpected can happen. What is recuperated in the making of this duplication is the supposed surface characterisation of an object. Artistic expression relating to
the reality of its time, its epoch’s perceived problems and self-orientation issues, are disconnected. It is not clear to me how we can successfully teach representation in this manner when what stands in the way is human life, culture, and society. Hegel considers this kind of imitation in art as “deceptive”: “the pursuit of imitation is on the same lines as the feat of the man who has taught himself to throw lentils through a small aperture without missing” (Hegel, 1975, p. 59–60).

However, it would be foolish to dismiss out of hand what is being suggested by mirroring the real fictively, because in teaching and learning these kinds of depictions do have a place. Exercises with the real as fictive in mind can be particularly helpful for students to learn, without which they will have problems knowing the physiognomic mode of understanding which can ‘realistically’ portray a person, place, or animal. A student has to bear in mind the types of standardised external recognitions a teacher might ask them to consider. For example, in which direction is the light coming from, whether or not this is a three-quarter view we are looking at, what colours one sees, is there foreshortening to consider in the angle and position one is painting the model from, what is in the background and in the foreground, the spatial extension of depth in the representation, tonal techniques and the more general need for the student to be aware of their immediate contact with the external world when presenting a pictorial view of the world.

The real-as-fictive representation becomes a useful exercise to articulate and construct so long as we are aware that they are personal ‘sensory visions’ that overwhelmingly have been exploited through the centuries by artists for other purposes. This process has value when it becomes a means to an end and there are thousands of artists using it in just this way: Jenny Saville’s Rosetta 2 (2005-6), Alexis Rockman’s The Farm (2000), and Dino Vallis’ Between Earth and Heaven (1999). In Chinese, Indian, or African art, past and present, there are clear cultural differences in the methods which engage common artistic problems. If we take Otto Dix as a further example, we might conclude that he also mirrors the real fictively, only he does not do so in the way Budd describes it. Thus the method that Budd has outlined shows just one way we can mirror the real fictively. The mirroring of the real fictively in art education can be achieved in all kinds of ways and as we have already suggested, the student’s artwork must have a ‘special nature of its own’, correlative with their perceptual world. We must be clear on this point, that however a figure is represented or enacted as the actually concrete realism of ‘there is’, the inner impulse of creation in art decides the question of the work’s bewitching effects.

To teach art with only a ‘duplicate of a model’ in mind would be to inhibit what the child can depict. A ‘duplicate of a model’ contains none of the elixir of art education that we first saw being developed in the Lascaux Caves that syntactically stresses a vision of life socially engaged. While this ‘duplicate of a model’ may be very skilful in one sense, the operational style it promotes may cease to have meaning for the child “for it is also part of the process that we recognise ourselves as well, and all our experience of the world are ultimately ways in which we develop familiarity with the world” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 100). We will have difficulty
recognising ourselves and generating any love for the world if everything we do in
art education punishes or trivialises the child’s vision of the world.

At primary school, the child’s simple pleasures, tenderness, and affections will
often lead them to create mimetically a resistance to a rigid duplicate schematisation of
a model. A life of human emotion, feeling, and emancipation is more important to
them. The painter and musician Paul Klee used mimetic representation in some of
his artwork but his mimetic representations have painterly intelligence to them.
When Klee paints a picture of the Moon or a coffee pot, he does not create a
duplicate model of these objects but rather reveals something of the demeanour of
these objects that reanimates our enjoyment, making us see them in a new or
forgotten way. William Wordsworth suggested that the duty of poetry was “to treat
of things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as
they seem to exist to the senses and to the passions” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 944).
For Wordsworth, the child who is interested in poetry must proceed from their own
experiences and exultations of delight that advances the character of their living
being, the inclusion of which poetry draws upon as its basic life. A child’s painting
of the Moon is not the beautiful Moon, but a marvellous painting of the Moon by
the child. Mimetic representations in art education depend upon the child seeing for
themselves the potential in things as their intimacy, enhanced human consciousness
and dwelling (Bachelard, 1994).

There are a number of ways mimetic representation can be taught. We can teach
it by examples (‘follow me as I do this’, or ‘show me you can do this’) or by a
display of physical work in the classroom or studio. Children also learn through
demonstrations, discussions, reading, performance, and slide or film shows; by
following what their peers are doing, by sharing their work and thoughts with
others, and by being a role model; the child learns to reconstruct and re-enact the
world; assignments where “‘all arts are like mirrors,’ according to Alain, ‘in which
Man learns and recognises something of himself of which he was unaware’”
(Comte-Sponville, 2005, p. 100). “What would Mozart have been without Haydn?
Schubert without Beethoven? All of them without Bach?” (Comte-Sponville, 2005,
p. 103) What did Manet learn from Velázquez or Monet from Manet or Francis
Bacon from Velázquez? What did Seamus Heaney learn from T.S. Eliot and what
did our eleven-year-old student learn from a sixteen-year-old student playing
Macbeth?

Some of the first painting lessons that children may tackle will produce images
of ‘my holiday’, ‘my hand’, ‘my new dress’, ‘I can stand on my head’, ‘I have a loose
tooth’, ‘my birthday party’, ‘mother and father’, ‘we are playing in the playground’, ‘I
house’, ‘me riding a bicycle’, ‘me drinking lemonade’, ‘zoo’ and ‘my bedroom
with me in the bed’. They may write a story about some of these things and act out
being a lion, a tree, a key, a monster, a pirate, eating a meal, or being a friend.
During music and dance lessons they may learn to dance spontaneously to the
rhythm of the music, to the sound of drums, thunder, water, wind, footsteps, a
creaking door, and a ticking clock.
We can separate mimetic practice from other art forms when “we imagine a painting that can be understood independently of its representational status, then we imagine an abstract painting” (Scruton, 1982, p. 210). To think that it is possible to understand “Rembrandt’s Nightwatch, for example, while being indifferent to or ignorant of its representational status is absurd” (Scruton, 1982, p. 210). For the music student who is learning to play the recorder, the teacher will say, ‘play it like this’, which implies a certain copying or reproduction but “musical imitation is evocative rather than exact; it conveys the idea of the thing” (Scruton, 1982, p. 211–212). Indeed, it is not copying but recognising. Our student has to demonstrate by showing and “showing points away from itself” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 128). In performance, musical imitation also requires precision. It is common to say to a student, ‘express these notes like this’ in order to show how the “music attracts us by a beauty intrinsic to its form” (Davies, 2005, p. 502), and the form, its figuration, is what the student learns. The student learns to react to the actions, executions, and suggestions of the teacher in closely connected ways. When music and drama are working together in songs, operas, plays, dances, and film scripts we might see representation and expression of different kinds overlapping. Equally, there is “[t]he imitation of sound by an auditory design—whether the dropping of the guillotine is imitated by pizzicato strings, as in Berlioz’s Fantastic Symphony, or by an actual guillotine specifically called for in the score” (Beardsley, 1981, p. 322).

We teach mimetic representation because it takes account of the human space and the world around us. We use it to entice, bond, inspire, and find out what resonates with our students. The child’s own reality and that of others expressed mimetically through art education is not just a stepping stone to other forms of artwork; it should invite creatively the provocation for further development of this art form since it can reflect, as Aristotle saw, a more philosophical basis than history (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 9, p. 2323); the flesh of existence.

The student-poet depicts a hotel in Paris but the student-actor does not depict a tragedy because their role is to enact it. The student-playwright describes a scene and the student-actor acts it out, but the student-musician does not paint Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, they learn to play it. James played Hamlet in the school play but James does not resemble Hamlet, he represents him. His acting, however, does remind the teacher that there is a striking resemblance about how he plays Hamlet and another student she remembers. Children in an art lesson are painting from a still life and have been asked to look at the dynamics of this still life set up, its abstract forms, space, tones colours, patterns, planes, rhythms, and negative shapes, for example. They are asked to use what they see to create an understanding of the still life in a representative idealised or dreaming way perhaps. Many of Matisse’s interior paintings of rooms have a decorative flatness, an idiomatic colour scheme and the breakup of planes and patterns in order to make his interiors vibrate with life. Matisse uses representational devices inventively as a means to enhance the picture space and to draw our attention to the room’s intimate psychological character. A sense of place and personality dictates the earnest way he uses representational qualities liberally.
CHAPTER 1

If the imitative production process is to succeed in art education, as Aristotle conceives, it would have to make plain to the senses the essential attributes of the ‘object’ being produced-performed and the way it is revealing this in order to show “What it is and that it is” (Aristotle, 1984, Book 6, p. 1619). The child’s painting is a representation and one we recognise as depicting a fox. The image the child has created draws our attention to the way they have shown the fox as being alert. In another instance they may draw an outline or a silhouette of the fox. Another child in the same class, colours in their fox painting by using mixed media materials like tissue paper, ink, water colour, and an atomizer. They may show the fox as a friend, a mother, a hunter, a wild animal, or as an inquisitive being. They may use tin cans or wire mesh to create a three-dimensional image of a fox asleep. Here the child elicits “the image from things and imaginatively project the image into things in one and the same process” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 17). The child’s artwork “makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory” (Heidegger, 2000, p. 145), a symbol of its own pulsation.

The poet Zbigniew Herbert in his visit to the Lascaux caves writes: “One of the most beautiful animal portraits in history is called the ‘Chinese Horse’. The name does not signify its race; it is a homage to the perfection of the drawing of the Lascaux master. A soft black contour, at once distinct and vanishing, both contains and shapes the body’s mass. A short mane, like that of a circus horse, impetuous, with thundering hooves. Ochre does not fill the body; the belly and legs are white. I realised that all descriptions, all inventories are useless in the presence of this masterpiece, which displays such a blinding, obvious unity. Only poetry and fairy-tales possess the power of instant creation. One should say, ‘Once upon a time, there was a beautiful horse from Lascaux’” (Herbert, 1985, p. 9–10).

II

“Let’s also tell poetry that there is an ancient quarrel between it and philosophy” (Plato, 1997b. Book 10, p. 1211).

Face-to-face and in no particular order of importance what follows in notation form is a summary of Plato’s and Aristotle’s thinking relating to the teaching of mimesis in art education. What is indicated in this summary is some of the dissimilarity between Plato’s and Aristotle’s understanding of the pedagogy of art education and the status of mimesis. Suffice to say that, although there is some agreement between these two philosophers, Aristotle’s Poetics can be interpreted as a virtual rebuke of much of what Plato thought mimetically of art education. Plato sees the value of imitation to be of minimum worth but Aristotle sees the value of imitation to be potentially of maximum worth. From this summary we will explore further a number of these issues.
Plato argues that the child must be trained to appreciate music, poetry and painting. The child learns “the love of order and beauty that has been moderated by education in music and poetry” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1040). Education ought to “end in the love of the fine and the beautiful” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1040). Education must be completed by art, argues Plato. Students should learn to imitate people who are virtuous “courageous, self-controlled and pious” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1033). Art education aims at only an “imitation of appearance” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1202). Art is concerned with likeness (Plato, 1997b, Book 6, p. 1130–31). An imitator in art produces likenesses which, Plato claims, are thrice removed from the truth (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1202). Art education involves only image making and that “is why it can produce everything” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1202). Art education encourages and excels in the excitable, insubstantial and “many multicoloured imitations” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1209). Plato believes that the mimetic artist is capable of deceiving “decent people” through their works of art (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1210). An imitator of art cannot know the “good or bad quality of anything” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1206). Image making gratifies “the irrational part” of life (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1210). Plato questions whether the artist image-making mimetic skills can never be construed as being among the best things we can do in life (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1203). He asserts that imitation in art education reproduces what comes easiest. Appearances can be “easily produced without knowledge of the truth” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1203). Innovation in art education should be frowned upon (Plato, 1997b, Book 4, p. 1056). Art education should be forbidden from imitating mad, dangerous or bad people (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1033). Plato wants to see a pure and plain style of mimetic art learning and teaching (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1034–35). Plato thinks that knowing (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1204) can never be achieved in art education because art education is a process of imitation. Art education is “inferior in respect to truth” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1209). It has “no graphs of the truth,” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1205) only images of the truth. A student learns “only images and not things that are” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1203). Plato is worried that if a student imitates word-for-word a narrative, for example, they may equate education with only memorisation.
“What does painting do in each case? Does it imitate that which is as it is, or does it imitate that which appears as it appears? Is it an imitation of appearance or of truth? (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1202)”

In the final analysis, the value of art education, for Plato, is not whether the student sings or dances beautifully but whether what is sung or danced is morally good for us (Plato, 1997, p. 1345–6).

Aristotle

- Mimesis is a common characteristic in how we learn, and the stage for Aristotle could be a moral force.
- The formative elements of mimesis are: plot, character, diction, action, depiction, rhythm, melody, gesture, expression, and thought.
- Aesthetic, social, and moral elevations are of enormous importance in mimetic art education.
- The student’s media, object, and manner determine the construction of mimetic artwork.
- Art education has a more philosophical basis than history (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 9, p. 2323).
- We classify a poet, musician, dancer and painter not in relation to their mimetic representations but in relation to their media.
- The object of the mimetic art for Aristotle is to represent people as either good or bad, elevated or base, honourable or dishonourable, happy or unhappy, upright or depraved, lucky or unlucky, strong or weak, prosperous or poor, vile or delightful, spontaneous or cautious.
- Teaching children and adults to construct and recognise the object as so-and-so. Through recognition, imitation in art education can correspond to the knowledge of the things themselves. It is a process that is committed to and capable of seeking out the case for other kinds of recognitions.
- Mimesis can represent people in direct action, in third person, through narratives, speeches, verse, movement, and direct impersonation.
- Mimesis in art education can involve all manner of diverse language games, metre, melody, movement, or image construction. Our music teacher might ask the school’s drama class to listen to the melody more closely when singing Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. The song, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is an example of how words become lyrics that respond to and are given meaning by a musical performance with its own internal-external dependent reality.
- Mimesis aims at qualification and obligation. It is a process concerned with “what it is and that it is” (Aristotle, 1984, Book 6, p. 1619).
- The teaching of mimesis is couched in tradition, declarative and ascribing qualities, improvisation, invention, selectivity, spectacle, complete action, episodes, necessity, reality, imagination, revelation, and meaning.
- Mimesis is ingrained with the incidents of life.
Aristotle argues that the imitative work of art in education can pronounce general truths (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 6, p. 2320). Issues that relate to what things are, about who we are, what we seem to be about, and what we would like things to be. The production knowledge of this imitation in art education can relate to universality when the student constructs the probable and necessary things we say and do: typically, normally and characteristically. The knowledge production must be shown to be perceptible, realistic, possible, credible, and reliable. Imitation in art education relates to whether an audience agrees that the mimetic artwork “communicates intelligible images of what it is reasonable” (Halliwell, 2002, p. 154) to suppose.

If we want a guideline for teaching how art imitates with all the flexibility and security we require for education, then Aristotle supplies us with one: “The poet being an imitator just like the painter or other maker of likenesses, he must necessarily in all instances represent things… either as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to be or to have been, or as they ought to be” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 25, p. 2337).

Aristotle is attempting to demonstrate, above all, what is good about imitation in art education: “however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning—gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-so” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 4, p. 2318).

For Aristotle, the arts in mimetic ways in education make good use of how, in the right way, they can discover, devise, treat, express, and act with knowledge and consciousness (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 14, p. 2326).

Our sketch of some of the pedagogy and knowledge production issues relating to mimesis will assist us now to evaluate further Plato’s and Aristotle’s thinking of imitation in art education. We will contrast and compare their respective philosophy.

Plato scrutinises the relevance of art education as mimetic practice from at least three different but interrelated perspectives. The first perspective is his epistemological concern as to whether imitation in art education can demonstrate knowledge. His second perspective is whether ethically, mimesis as a teaching practice in art is good for children. The third perspective is how he explains what an imitator of art is.

Now, the basic epistemological question that Plato raises is whether art education is of the order of first, second, or third division knowledge. In Book Ten of The Republic he comes to the conclusion which was an argument that began in Book Two of The Republic, namely that art occupies third division knowledge production (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p 1202). What does he mean by third division knowledge production? Plato is not only claiming that art education is of low knowledge output, he is also claiming positively that it has knowledge of a sort which, he maintains, does complete an education (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1040)
and is essential for the love of it. This is what R.G. Collingwood in his 1925 paper *Philosophy of Art and Mind* discusses and what Alexander Nehamas generally agrees with, in his 1982 paper *Plato on Imitation and Poetry in Republic 10*. On the other hand, although art completes education, John Dewey argues in *Art as Experience* that art education for Plato is no more than a stepping stone: just the first rung on the ladder that children need to step on in order to progress in their development towards ‘higher’ knowledge of the world. “Art is to educate us away from art to perception of purely rational essences” (Dewey, 1980, p. 291). Dewey staunchly objects to this move on the grounds that it would be detrimental to a flourishing culture and human social relationships.

Dewey clearly recognised a flaw in Plato’s argument. Can Plato reasonably show that art education never uses knowledge to enrich its experiences and connectedly that it lacks control over the actions and proper judgements that it exercises? According to Nehamas, Plato “believes that the painter lifts the surface off the subject and transplants it onto the painting” (Nehamas, 1982, p. 62). By thus analysing wrongly art in education as so construed, Plato’s conclusion that art is third division knowledge is also incorrect, since it is based on the belief in part, ‘that the painter lifts the surface off the subject and transplants it onto the painting’.

However misconceived Plato’s construct of knowledge production of art education is, this does not get rid of his argument entirely. Plato can still ask, what value does art education have? An argument of this kind relates to the “ontological status of its appearance” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 13). As Gadamer underlines, Aristotle supplies an answer to this problem. What escapes Plato but not Aristotle (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 9, p. 2323), Dewey and Gadamer here, is how poetry imitates not history as an historian would write about, but “like the reality...in our sense of the term” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 15, p. 2327). “The immediacy of the mode of poetic enactment is not required for the sake of a deceptive simulation of life, but in order to be the vehicle of a structure of meaning which Aristotle believes can nourish the understanding and move the emotions with ethical force” (Halliwell, 1998, p. 137).

If art in education is ‘like the reality...in our sense of the term’, by writing, performing and drawing it, how Plato proceeds to class such art as bereft of truth “is a result of a mythology of what is accomplished by argument” (Diamond, 1996, p. 9).

Plato’s theory of art education believes that, on the one hand, a student can learn to imitate things in nature and, on the other hand, that this process of learning does not require knowledge of the things themselves (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1201-3). Excellence in appearance is not the same epistemologically as excellence in conception which are always superior to appearances in art. Plato’s theory is suggesting that images in art can be reflections of the things themselves without in essence being of the things themselves. So, a further reason why Plato construes art as having third division status connects to the fact that art education is interested in the look, feel, movement, image, and sound of things and shows a bias towards these things when constructing art. Yet, if we come back to Aristotle’s argument that the production process of art education is attempting to reveal something to the senses of ‘what it is and that it is’, would we then be correct to assume that art
education is imitating nothing more than the surface of things? Dewey (1980) notes that if we try to turn art into a philosophical reflection, we erase the manifestation of art as experienced. Direct and immediate sense qualitative experiences are then extinguished in order to adopt a standard concept which bears little resemblance to the artwork’s actual vividness and meaning in experience. The relevance or lack of significance in art lies in the experience of it, not in philosophy per se. Furthermore, if art education is as fickle as Plato surmises, can this be sustained when mimetically the student constructs a likeness that purports to be a “realism which depends on the idea of an external relation between the logical characteristics of things and the logical features built into our modes of expression” (Diamond, 1996, p. 142)?

IV

One of Plato’s propositions is that imitation in art education makes use of the concept of what a likeness is. Hence, as an example, for a student completing a painting, “[i]t is for the picture or some part of it, to be a pictorial likeness of an object of that sort” (Charlton, 2000, p. 473). A pictorial representation is neither a drama, musical or dance representation, and a pictorial likeness by itself still has to be filled out with what constitutes a ‘good’ resemblance and a ‘bad’ resemblance for a six-year-old and a fifteen-year-old. When our art examiner comes to the school and does not know the student’s sitter in the painting, we might think that he or she cannot possibly know what the student has constructed as a likeness of the subject. However, our examiner will still be competent enough to know what succeeds as a likeness and they will study the student’s evidence for this in a variety of ways. The student’s sketchbook would demonstrate to the examiner how they are exploring the sitter’s features and the corresponding resemblances between the images executed in the sketchbook and their final piece of work. The resemblance between the sitter and the picture of this sitter depends on its art and the teacher is encouraging the student, in this instance, to see the sitter representatively being evoked by their media, mark making skills and an openness towards the perceptual context of the appearance of the sitter.

Furthermore, what if the student is interested in a radically different kind of likeness of their sitter? What if the student starts off producing a likeness that begins as a duplicate model but then in the course of this exercise something happens by chance which transforms the artwork’s images of the sitter? Should the student be ready to take seriously whatever they uncover when they draw to realise? What if slowly but surely the student brings the feeling of life into their painting so the likeness that is now created is very different from the one they started off with? What happens if the student sees something he or she did not see at first which makes them want to now change the study they have created? Plato, might still reply that these are just image making exercises but what if the student in such a process shows more vulnerability or sorrow of their model, or their stiffness, their seduction and beauty, their innocence and joy, the poverty of their lives, the sleepiness of the figure, a kindness about their sitter, their boredom or
their quirky appearance? Perhaps it is the way the model clenches her fists awkwardly across her body that suggests to the student just the right kind of likeness the student is interested in exploring.

The imitation process, as Gadamer announces, is a showing one. Likeness is only as revealing as the thing is shown to be in art education. “For imitation enables us to see more than so-called reality. What is shown is, so to speak, elicited from the flux of manifold reality. Only what is shown is intended and nothing else” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 129). We must therefore see the likeness that the student has created by what their representation begets. If we judge the student’s artwork merely by the ‘pictorial likeness of an object of that sort, we will surely fail to appreciate what is being shown as a showing in itself.

The artist Jim Dine is, to some extent, noted for his imitations of nature but “Dine’s interest in flower imagery emerged first in his prints because, he recalls, ‘I saw in hard-ground etching the way to be precise in rendering the flowers that came from these steel engravings’. When making prints for some years afterwards, it seemed natural to Dine to work not from life but from other prints, in which the forms had already been translated into line” (Livingstone, 1994, p. 11). Dine’s mimetic representations are not only taken from engraving techniques but also from the flower imagery in the engravings, from different flower imagery in general, from the physical marks his actions make, from his observational, imaginative and emotional responses to his ongoing artwork, from his reshaping of forms on the surface of the paper and from his understanding of botanical illustrations. Dine sees himself as a romantic artist and the medium he uses corresponds to what he genuinely feels about flowers and nature, from the qualities of his representation, from what he understands about structure, historical associations, composition, chance, colour relationships, metaphor, symbolism, lighting, texture and tones, and from prior experiences. Hence, his creation of a flower likeness is the result of many complex, unifying, and interrelated responses.

Substituting Jim Dine for a student in our class or studio working from a set of flowers is to beg the question how the student is first observing the flowers: on a table in the centre of a room, against a window or French doors, or in a corner space surrounded by a few other objects and are the flowers in some sort of plant pot or are they placed on the table as they are? Why do people put them on graves and why do they wear them in their hair and around their necks, why are they sent to people with messages attached? What are they for? Other questions are: Has the student created a likeness that sensibly involves an abstract order sophisticated enough to consolidate the figurative presence of it brevity? Are there botanical, naturalistic or scientific characteristics about the artwork or does it appear like a romantic-idealistic or minimalist piece of stylistic intent? Perhaps the student adopts a likeness similar to Georgia O’Keeffe’s or Emil Nolde’s flower paintings. They may even want to create a photomontage in the political style of John Heartfield of their flowers, or as a sign of peace? Do the flowers lend themselves to all these possible interpretations without sacrificing what the flowers exhibit? In its likeness does the student’s artwork make public, as Heidegger (2000, p. 145) discerns, something other than the mere thing itself, a flower?
The artist William Hogarth was noted for his moral satire on life in his 1731 *Harlot’s Progress* and in his 1742-4 *A Rake’s Progress*. In both works he wanted his artwork to appear like a theatrical representation, a stage drama. Dario Fo’s *Accidental Death Of An Anarchist* was first performed on stage in 1970, William Blake’s *Newton* (1795), and Richard Hamilton, John McHale and John Voelcker’s (1956) *Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes So Different, So Appealing?* These are all artworks that would have displeased Plato because they demonstrate a multitude of ways that display how art mimetically can “mix together and separate” (Plato, 1997a, p. 363). The frightening thing for art education is that Plato (1997b, Book 3, p. 1032) would have then rejected William Blake for his poetry and fine art mixing and for his satire of Newton; he would have rejected Dario Fo’s play for his loose portrait of the facts of the case and his reliance on comedy, and he would have rejected William Hogarth for the mixing of theatrical drama with fine art. While Dario Fo’s *Accidental Death Of An Anarchist* is fictional, the play keeps the audience always in the possible, demonstrating as it does “a particular point” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 6, p. 2320). Plato clearly wanted to see a ‘pure’ and plain style applied to the teaching of mimetic art, believing that this was the best way to integrate young people into society (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1034–5).

Plato would have appreciated at one level *Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes So Different, So Appealing?* Nevertheless, in this artwork the image-making appearance would have disturbed him, the likeness of which he would never have approved of because of its alleged lack in appearance of sufficient knowledge (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1203). We can question this retort again from him as we have done via Aristotle’s indispensable argument relating to the concept of recognition. Everything in this mixed-media artwork “involves making delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, identifying symbol systems and characters within these systems and what these characters denote and exemplify, interpreting works and reorganising the world in terms of works and in terms of the world” (Goodman, 1986, p. 191).

To be sure, *Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes So Different, So Appealing?* Reflects the artists’ self-understanding but, it is still a self-understanding full of actual knowledge of the world whose images allegorically remain as true to life events. One could reply that this is a little unfair of us because such art did not exist like this in Plato’s time. Maybe we should think, as Aristotle did, that Homer, Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes were poets whose faults could be rationalised in such a way that “if the poet’s description be criticised as not true to fact, one may urge perhaps that the object ought to be as described—an answer like that of Sophocles, who said that he drew men as they ought to be, and Euripides as they are. If the description, however, be neither true nor of the thing as it ought to be, the answer must be then, that it is in accordance with opinion” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 25, p. 2338). As a further teaching issue, what attitude should the teacher take when, as Aristotle mentions, the child shows a technical error in their performance or representation that is “only accidentally connected with the poetic art” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 25, p. 2338)?
In making the appearance of a bed, the artist, for Plato, has to handle all those things that make it a particular appearance of it. An adequate appreciation of a bed in appearance is not seen as equal to an adequate appreciation of the concept of it. A student may have an eloquent style of writing but have no idea of what makes it eloquent. For example, a student may be capable of a ‘perfect’ match of one of Casper David Friedrich’s landscape paintings. In creating an ‘exact’ likeness, however, it does not follow that the student understands the ideas behind Friedrich’s work and if they do not understand these ideas, of what consequence is the imitation (Cannatella, 2004, p. 69)? We can paint a man or woman a million times and in a million different ways and still not know anything necessarily more about him or her, if all we are doing is executing appearances arbitrarily. Sustained familiarity and realisation, not uninformed actions, are what the teacher encourages in imitation in art. Mimetic teaching requires from the student that they are touched by questions and actions of their own making whose depth of insight is discernible. To remove any random performance and misrepresentation, the students learn to develop control over their subject-matter by restricting themselves to the task in hand. They take care not to separate their perceptions from the spirit of the thing and from a point where there is intensity in their actions. This means that the unveiling of recognition in art teaching has a relation to the fact that the “wholeness of an image is not an outlying wholeness produced by its contents, but an in-dwelling wholeness thoroughly pervading its content and indistinguishable from them” (Todes, 2001, p. 145).

If each student painting captures a different life of our individual through appearances, are we not compelled to think that each painting exists as a knowing different painting? The photographer Arnold Newman in his photographs of Pier Mondrian in 1942, Max Ernst in 1942, Igor Stravinsky in 1946 and Pablo Picasso in 1954 are elevated examples of an art that require from us an understanding of each picture quality, that Newman clearly understands his subjects and connectedly why we must see the allegorical nature of each works symbolic content. His 1963 photograph of the industrial magnate Alfried Krupp who was convicted at the Nuremberg trials of war crimes is the kind of deep likeness making that Plato never comes to grips with but Aristotle does in his Poetics. Aristotle recognised the coping skills of the artist to know why he needed to create a staged artifice of a man visible but unseen, the process which affects the construction of this story and the enunciating power of its attraction.

“The content of ‘mind’ is not only thought; sensual experience is as much mental as intellectual reflection” (Graham, 1995, p. 32). In which case, the student in their represented painting of a bed may be demonstrating aesthetically something more than what a bed is theoretically, just as the artist Tracy Emin in her My Bed (1998) work, is more than a mattress, linen and four pillows. “John Burger once demonstrated, we can see caught in Gainsborough’s portrait of the Andrews, something that they themselves may not have been able to see, a distinctively proprietarily attitude” (Graham, 1995).

How accurate can art education be if art education encourages, as Collingwood declares, “an orgy of misrule” (Collingwood, 1925, p. 156)? Can it produce ‘what
it is and that it is’ if the education of art is ‘an orgy of misrule’? Is everything we have said so far worthless now? What Collingwood is referring to is how our passions and affections play an important role in the creation of art that Plato hitherto had noted. When the student is creating art they do so argues Plato, in rhythmical, sensuous, instinctive, pleasurable, melodic, visionary and kinetic ways. There is a “constant search for novelty” (Plato, 1997, p. 1348). By working in this way “the artist does not have an adequate grasp of the functional specifications, and thus of a vital part of the nature, of the objects that he represents. This is the main reason why Plato objects to the artist’s lack of concern with the ‘invisible’ or nonsensible” (Moravcsik, 1982, p. 38). This is puzzling because, surely, as an example, Arnold Newman’s photograph of Alfried Krupp (1962) does just that; it exposes the invisible through visual means: “it makes visible that which one should not be able to see and which one is not able to see without astonishment” (Marion, 2004, p. 1). The unseen is uncovered and rendered in Newman’s photograph. Picasso’s Guernica (1937), Charles Dickens’ Nicholas Nickleby, Franz Kafka’s The Trial, Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, or Mary Oliver’s Wild Geese, show in different modes how the arts confront us with the invisible and expose it. Furthermore, we should not get carried away with art education being ‘an orgy of misrule’, as this implies that art education is undisciplined and flimsy. To reiterate, teaching mimetically is concerned with how students are actualising the possibilities of recognition, a way of revealing something ‘as’, and to think otherwise is nonsense.

Yes, Plato sees art as an “imitation of appearance,” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1202) but he derives this grip to be “easily produced without knowledge of the truth” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1203). But again what kind of truth are we talking about? And few art lessons, if any, ignore what is essential to recognise, know, and learn. What is reached for in performance or represented in an art lesson is precisely the refined that defies us and provokes us. If we were to accept Collingwood’s notion that art education presupposes ‘an orgy of misrule’ as a main stay of art education we would be seriously risking what we have said all along about imitation in art education; namely, that children in an art lesson will deposit meaning through recognition. The “aesthetic of non-differentiation” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 117) is opposed, because it is not an education that recognises what the musician is playing, the dancer is choreographing; and the process whereby our student makes his poem stand out telling us something about the real experience of life that is no accident of construction. We can reject Plato’s theory of art because the concept of imitation as recognition is missing. Recognition in art education does not come from a “dark affair” (Plato, 1997b, Book X, p. 1201) a mystical production. Rather, “every representation finds its genuine fulfilment simply in the fact that what it represents is emphatically there” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 119). There is real life going on and living growth from the child in the art class or studio but Plato is constantly telling us that that art is only images, “not things that are” (Plato, 1997b, Book X, p. 1203). Ignoring the sense of life in the child’s art is to exclude the child’s vision of life, and “no matter how much the variety of the
performance or the realisation of such a structure can be traced back to the conception of the players—it also does not remain in the subjectivity of what we think, but it is embodied there. Thus it is not at all a question of a mere subjective variety of conceptions, but of the work’s own possibilities of being that emerge as the work explicates itself, as it were, in the variety of its aspects” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 117–8).

V

We have stated briefly how Plato misjudges art education mimetically but we have yet to examine his view on how art education teaching should be taught. What kind of mimetic material should the teacher teach in art? To answer this question is to state that the only imitation that is to be allowed in art education is when it helps to form good habits. The student should imitate people who are virtuous: “courageous, self-controlled and pious” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1033). This is not the kind of programme that I have painted in Section One of this chapter. Courage, self-control and piousness, however well intentioned these virtues are, do not make a syllabus and they do not explain syntactically how the knowledge production of mimesis in art education is to embody them. As indisputably good a person we want the student to be, being a good person in the Platonic sense implied will not establish how the student is to play the cello well. The student has to be musically trained to play the cello well.

Aristotle agrees with Plato that students should be acting virtuously when singing, dancing, or when writing poems and stories. However, he does not quite go along with this either, because he argues that the “character in a play is that which reveals the choice of the agents” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 6, p. 2321). Characters have to be real even if the student is acting out the role of a malicious character in a play. Tragedy should be constructed to arouse pity and fear (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 6, p. 2321) and “a good poet often stretches out a plot beyond its capabilities, and is thus obliged to twist the sequence of an incident” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 9, p. 2323). The student with all the righteous virtues in the world must still restore to art its real presentation and the “obligatoriness” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 118) of thoughts and actions expressive of art.

Plato asks: “don’t you understand that we first tell stories to children?” (Plato, 1997b, Book 2, p. 1015). He unequivocally wants to protect children and to make sure they are safe, the state must create laws. The knowable world is to be censured from above. Plato rejects poetry, particularly staged performances, for their lack of understanding of what constitutes the good. Yet the overcoming of circumstantiality and ignorance that Plato clearly wants to see cannot be effective by censuring means alone. Undoubtedly related to this as Plato explicates is the notion that philosophy and poetry have long had an adversarial relationship: ‘let’s also tell poetry that there is an ancient quarrel between it and philosophy’. The quarrel is about the precision of philosophy versus the reputed discursive thinking of poetry which, for Plato, is all too often misleading. Plato makes a serious point. But is
philosophical thinking inexorably more right and more accurate than poetic thinking about the world? While “[a] general account may give us necessary conditions for choosing well; it cannot by itself give sufficient conditions” (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 93). I want to quote some short passages from Frederick Schiller because he shows to us what poetry can bring as useful to this situation. “Man, neither altogether satisfied with the senses, nor forever capable of thought, wanted a middle state, a bridge between the two states, bringing them into harmony” (Schiller, 2006 p. 240).

“Law only governs the actions” (Schiller, 2006, p. 240). “Where the influence of civil laws ends, that of the stage begins” (Schiller, 2006, p. 240). Whereas, poetry is partly responsible for controlling “the heart and follows thought to the source” (Schiller, 2006, p. 240). “Where venality and corruption blind and bias justice and judgement, and intimidation perverts its ends, the stage seizes the sword and scales and pronounces a terrible verdict on vice” (Schiller, 2006, p. 240). “When morality is no more taught, religion no longer received, or laws exist, Medea would still terrify us with her infanticide. The sight of Lady Macbeth, while it makes us shudder, will also make us rejoice in a good conscience, when we see her, the sleep-walker, washing her hands and seeking to destroy the awful smell of murder. Sight is always more powerful to man than description; hence the stage acts more powerfully than morality or law” (Schiller, 2006, p. 240). “But in this the stage only aids justice. A far wider field is really open to it. There are a thousand vices unnoticed by human justice, but condemned by the stage; so, also, a thousand virtues overlooked by man’s law are honoured on the stage” (Schiller, 2006, p. 240). “Vice is portrayed on the stage in an equally telling manner. Thus, when old Lear, blind, helpless…is seen knocking in vain at his daughters’ doors, and in tempest and night he recounts by telling his woes to the elements, and ends by saying: ‘I have given you all’,—how strongly impressed we feel at the value of filial piety, and how hateful ingratitude seems to us!” (Schiller, 2006, p. 241).

In the examples just shown, art education is constantly getting involved in the affairs of life which shift the narratives view points to emphasise, penetrate, and express some of the true realities of living. We find further in many children stories big bad wolves, monsters, ghouls, robots; murders, depravity, deceitfulness, wizards, witches, magic and talking bears. Plato had difficulty with such image-making stories. He objected to someone in a pantomime imitating trumpets, pulleys, dogs and cuckoos, “neighing horses, bellowing bulls, roaring rivers, the crashing sea, and thunder” (Plato, 1997b, Book 3, p. 1033-4). He never comes to grips with the benevolent fantasy of the child and their imaginative intelligence without which things can very quickly backfire on education to shackle the living lives of children, their ability to self-interrogate, recognise, and experience the measure of things for themselves, tell apart one thing from another and how things can make sense to them even if that thing is a talking bear.

“I’ve got you—said the wolf, and yawned. The sheep turned its teary eyes toward him.—Do you have to eat me? Is it really necessary?

—Unfortunately, I must. This is how it happens in all the fables: Once upon a time a naughty sheep left its mother. In the forest it met a bad wolf who…” (Herbert, 1999, p. 65).
An aspect of Plato’s position in *The Republic* is that the young can be easily fooled about the good life and seduced by it. In defence of Plato, Simon Blackburn admits that the written text, as much as the performance or image, may be “easily turned into an object of recitation or fetish, the foodstuff of unintelligent fundamentalism” (Blackburn, 2007, p. 6). Yet does the ‘foodstuff of unintelligent fundamentalism’ come from reading and appreciating *Winnie-the Pooh* or *The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish*? In these two stories the children may find ways which freely and directly move them into the direction to do what is good.

As in Book Ten of *The Republic* Plato asserts that imitation in art education reproduces what comes easiest. As a teacher our reply might be that if a student imitated in this fashion, how convincing would the imitation be? How would they be able to piece together and preserve in their artwork some of the high dignity, tension and beauty of life? This still leaves the question whether art can be used for the purposes of ‘unintelligent fundamentalism’, but surely the same could be said for science, business, philosophy, or politics. Really, are we to think that the design and the building process that went into the Pantheon were easy? If we take a good look at any Greek sculpture from around the fourth century B.C. and observe their muscle structures, the position of humps and hollows in the bodies, their posture, proportions and gestures, are we to think that the artist reproduces what comes easiest? Our rebuttal is that imitation in art education is not easy to produce creatively. Ultimately, nothing can protect us from someone who is determined to use art or science for propaganda purposes. Making the artwork’s recognition clear is surely a step to foil the ‘foodstuff of unintelligent fundamentalism’? Plato has a point when he states: “The young can’t distinguish what is allegorical from what isn’t, and the opinions at this age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable” (Plato, 1997b, Book II, p. 1017). However, the teaching of imitation in art is concerned, as we have noted, with distinguishing what is allegorical from what is not allegorical.

In the final analysis the value of art education, for Plato, is not whether the student sings or dances beautifully, but whether what is sung or danced is good (Plato, 1997, p. 1345–6) for society. The singing and dancing may be beautifully performed and thus good in this sense. However, his point is that some moral agreement is needed to distinguish what is good over and above what is visually or musically good as a performance. For example, “a work of art may be judged to be aesthetically good insofar as it is beautiful, is formally unified and strongly expressive, but aesthetically bad insofar as it trivialises the issues with which it deals and manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes” (Gaut, 2001, p. 183). Any student’s artwork which attempted to display ethically reprehensible attitudes would be hard to accept educationally as a good work. However, a piece of music or a dance ‘judged to be aesthetically good insofar as it is beautiful’ may be morally good for us too. As Compte-Sponville maintains, we “would be less beautiful, less cultured, less happy …less true and less human” (Comte-Sponville, 2005, p. 108), if art education did not teach us the kind of contact that is needed to shape, see, feel, challenge, liberate, extend, respond, celebrate, and take pleasure from life.
Some theorists have argued that any abstract concept of what makes an actual artwork good is a long way short of judging the actual artwork of the student. Can a student’s work of art also be a good work of art when “it takes a representative of the art-world to make a work of art” (Wollheim, 1998, p. 14)? If without seeing the student’s artwork we have already determined what the good in their painting should be, then this is no more than an obscure account of “paintingness” (Wollheim, 1998, p. 15). Arthur Danto remarks whether we can “elicit equivalent experiences through inequivalent stimuli” (Danto, 1994, p. 150)? As Danto goes on to say in relation to Bishop Berkeley’s theory of mind, “what the mind contains are ideas, and ideas are just their contents, so the difference between a cow and the idea of a cow is not there to be drawn by Berkeley, who is after all eager to identify cows with the idea of cows” (Danto, 1994, p. 151). “Thus the medium is a kind of metaphysical effigy for consciousness, in that it is never part of the picture but sacrifices itself as it were, in an act of total withdrawal and self-effacement, leaving only content’” (Danto, 1994, p. 152).

The questionable status of the knowledge production which Plato attributes to art education is summed up by three questions Plato poses: “What does painting do in each case? Does it imitate that which is as it is, or does it imitate that which appears as it appears? Is it an imitation of appearance or of truth?” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1202). Emphatically, Blackburn discredits this commentary. “The disastrous move here is to suppose that representing how something, such as a bed or a chair, or President Bush, appears, is not representing a bed or a chair or President Bush at all, but only this different thing, their appearance” (Blackburn, 2007, p. 151). As Blackburn continues, “for it does not seem to have occurred to Plato that representations may bring out new aspects of the very things they represent. The sundial or watch does not have to substitute for an interest in the time. A cartoon of your favourite politician does not just present a substitute or shadow to look at instead of the very person. It presents the person, looking perhaps mad, or bad, or wild or stupid, and thereby suggests, and potentially reveals, an aspect of the person” (Blackburn, 2007, p. 151–2).

Nehamas interprets Plato as saying that “many make fun of me…but none of the unwise can act like me” (Nehamas, 1982, p. 57). We can make a number of distinctions from this. One is to do with how we can, in an uneducated manner, make fun of someone mimetically. Plato thinks, as shown in the above Nehamas quote, that it does not take a lot of intelligence in order for someone to physically mimic him. The bully in the class might mimic someone in a physical and vocal way. Plato, however, is making the distinction that in order to mimic him none of the unwise possess the talent to act like him. By this, he is indicating how difficult it is to imitate Plato’s intellectual powers. One cannot act like him, claims Plato, unless one shows the philosophical nature of his thinking. The only way to imitate Plato would be to rationalise as he does. To mimic Plato, as he sees himself, is to think logically and wisely.
When our well rehearsed student actor comes on stage to orate from Shakespeare’s *King Richard the Third*: “Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York; And all the clouds that lour’d upon our house” we know what the audience back then and the audience now are recognising in this soliloquy. This is Richard Duke of Gloucester and “knowledge here means recognition” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 119). We should distinguish between mimicking another person and making fun of ourselves. For example, our student-actor imitates Richard Duke of Gloucester in Shakespeare’s *King Richard the Third*. In the text, Richard not only makes fun of himself but he is also very clever and devious. He describes how he sees himself and in so doing he exposes the essence of himself that we think of as representative of the man. Shakespeare speaks the language of poetry and identifies for us the character of Richard in Act One of the play:

“But I—that am not shap’d for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking glass—
I—that am rudely stamp’d, and want love’s majesty
I—that am curtail’d of this fair proportion,
Cheated of features by dissembling nature,
Deform’d, unfinish’d sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them”

The student-actor who plays the fool in a play is acting like the character he or she is supposed to be. Physical mimicking is different from verbal mimicking but in Shakespeare’s *King Richard the Third* the mimicking we see by Richard is self-mocking and cunning. What shrug of the shoulders, facial expression, hand gesture or turning of the body is our student-actor deploying in his physical mimicry of Richard? Yet, Plato’s point is surely that the unwise cannot behave like me, a remark that reinstates the importance that not any kind of mimicking will do and no teacher of drama would disagree with that. To mimic Plato on stage we would have to show the considerable intellectual talents he possessed.

The student-actor uses mime as a means to an end. He will not be content with just repeating the lines of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*; he will also want to be seen as Hamlet on stage, expressing what evokes the pain of Hamlet so as to produce a realistic performance of Shakespeare’s character Hamlet. The tone, the gesture, the readiness, and the valedictory speeches have to be spoken with penetrating insight. Acting helps the audience to see more than the “dog that looks at the pointing hand” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 128).

Admittedly, what Plato is worried about in the broader sense is that a student could recite word-for-word one of his dialogues without really getting to grip with the argument of the dialogue. Learning becomes equated with memorisation. What we have is an education which favours mirroring appearances rather than intellectual understanding. This is only true, of course, if this imitation is the only
kind of learning that an art teacher instructs about mimesis. ‘Learning your lines’ relates to learning to speak your lines: on time, softly, gently and with elegance. Our student-actor must know how to play their part with a performance the audience can recognise evocatively. Reciting a poem word-for-word may be seen as more than a test of memory, as it may generate the feeling that one is holding on to something important to remember. Other complications can arise if we have only a simple educational notion of mimicking. There is plenty of imitative work that goes on in dance and music performances but dance and music imitation teaching stresses not imitation in appearance but imitation in depth. Various mimetic stylistic turns and interpretations may be involved, for example, when playing the notes as instructed and when playing the notes as Purcell’s piece (Davies, 2005, p. 499). As we have argued, it is proper for art education to be concerned with productive procedures. Stephen Halliwell mentions that these productive procedures are not the confines of literal copying which “condemns its products to the realm of the derivative and spurious” (Halliwell, 2002, p. 55). Indeed, Ernst Gombrich reminds us that an artist “cannot transcribe what he sees; he can only translate it into the terms of his medium” (Gombrich, 1977, p. 30) and “[t]he artist cannot copy a sunlit lawn, but he can suggest it” (Gombrich, 1977, p. 33).

From the above Nehamas quote, ‘many make fun of me…but none of the unwise can act like me’, we can further draw the conclusion that there is a difference between mimicking and emulation. One can mimic and emulate at the same time, just as a student can mimic and emulate his big brother or sister. Plato does not believe that a child should be given a free hand to mimic what they like. Imitation must comprehend “correctness” (Plato, 1997, p. 1348). Correctness for Plato would mean that the student shows himself to be Plato’s equal or has shown himself to understand the passage. But equally, we have to note from Aristotle that “the art imitating by means of the action on the stage” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 22, p. 2335) involves another kind of correctness. At one level what Aristotle is driving at in his Poetics is not straightforwardly a mimicking and emulating task; it is an art. The performance demands an art that is familiar, veracious, and moving. Because it is an art we are talking about, our students must proceed by their own experiences and that of others familiar with the art form.

Plato wants educational imitation to convey good people, good rules, and good situations, (Nehamas, 1982, p. 49) in life, on stage, as well as in novels. He overlooks the extent to which this requires an art in life, on stage, and in novels. Drama as tragedy is not just a report of what has happened, stating the facts of the case. The performance needs exemplary moments of acting, of deliberate voice inflexions, humane munificence, and ‘masterful’ images of tenderness, suffering, resistance, provocation, remorse, and tyranny, if the audience in the theatre is to believe that such a person is good or bad. Acting must have a hold upon the audience’s attention, saturating their senses. Stage production must engage the audience. Aristotle states that educationally, when the student acts on stage, the imitative part they play should involve those incidents that arouse the conveying of goodness and badness (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 9, p. 2323). This arousing, designed to produce an emotional and thoughtful response, Aristotle sees as a necessary aspect of the craft characterising
enactment. What arouses the audience is what will open them up to the good and the bad situation in the drama as truth-to-life. The student’s art in a play is imitating true-to-life incidents which, Aristotle proposes, requires perceptions of reality as much as knowing intellectually. The poet’s art is significant in itself. In this case, the student’s art relates to testing ideas in their own acute manner and with the constraints of what is literally present in the obvious and subtle formalities of what constitutes a good or bad person. We find that it is in this educational art which the teacher is often concerned about, an enactment which awakens the nature of the drama’s reality. In a further twist away from Plato, Aristotle realises that the artist’s art in terms of melody, tragedy, comedy and so forth, represents elements of difference in the arts, which Aristotle calls “means of their imitation” (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 1, p. 2316–7). The imitation has moved on from being only a factor of what a good person is to being also an art of imitation. A factor of this art is how the art’s productive procedure creates a melody, plot, story, metaphor, rhyme, and sonnet. The student’s art-producing procedure influences the results of their musicological scholarship. Knowing how comedy is performed is having knowledge of the art of it. It is this imitational practice, Aristotle surmises, that sets art education apart.

It is only when “states arise out of like activities” (Aristotle, 1984a, Book II, p. 1743) that the good is seen. Knowing the like activity is evident when the student-actor performs it ‘like this’, ‘can you do this’ and ‘do you recognise this’ as like activities that contribute to excellence in art education. Now, perform it ‘like this’ may seem to vindicate Plato’s argument of ‘putting knowledge into souls’ but the paradox is that art education cannot be putting knowledge into souls “since they are only images, not things that are” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1203). We have seen how Blackburn defeats that argument.

The teacher can say what the performance needs is ‘like this’ but the way you are performing it is not “like this”; ‘can you see the difference’? Aristotle surely convinces us, “it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced” (Aristotle, 1984a, Book II, p. 1743). The differences between the good and the bad playing are in the doing, where, for Aristotle, the good arises out of lyre-player’s mimetic activities. When you can produce artwork mimetically in painting, sculpture, acting, cinematography, writing, architecture, and singing, for example, the appropriate form of the good in one sense, is grasped by the student. As previously remarked, ‘like this’ in art education presupposes a showing, and the showing is an indispensable attempt to express significance in its own right.

Imitation in art education is: (1) a natural impulse of life, (2) a part of a realistic attitude to learning, (3) it embraces truth to life experiences, (4) it’s an effective and efficient form of learning, (5) it concerns familiarity and recognition, (6) it stimulates excitement because it is of this world, (7) it is a precise, supple and creative form of intelligence in art education, (8) it is a part of a process that corresponds to learning that gathers the meaning and showing of a plethora of things, (9) knowledge production is an important part of it, and (10) it expresses ‘what it is and that it is’ as an art.
In Section One of this chapter I outlined an agenda concerned with the teaching of mimesis in art education. This was followed by an analysis of Plato’s and Aristotle’s understanding of mimesis in art education. We have ascertained how, on the one hand, Plato insists that the imitative work of art in education is “inferior in respect to truth” (Plato, 1997b, Book 10, p. 1209), and on the other hand, we have seen Aristotle insist, contrary to Plato, that the imitative work of art in education can pronounce general truths (Aristotle, 1984b, Book 6, p. 2320). Our educational discussion has focused on some of the intricacies of Plato and Aristotle. We have been open to Plato’s criticism of art education, but our reply has been that generally he misconstrues the mimetic art educational process in conceptual and perceptive ways. Without a doubt, he shows himself to have a very limited understanding of the complexity and meaning of art education. His empirical evidence is poor. In contrast, Aristotle’s *Poetics* explains many of the characteristics of mimetic art education. He shows himself in his *Poetics* to be a much better analytical philosopher of art education than Plato. While the demonstration of an argument is perhaps stronger in Plato than Aristotle, Plato’s deduction that art education is thrice removed from the truth is a statement unsupportable by the facts as we have discussed them here.

Subsequently, in this first chapter we have explored extensively the mimetic production of educational knowledge. The elegance of it and what can be good about imitation in art education has been discussed, along with the capabilities that are sometimes needed for it. We have seen how mimesis in art education is a changing and ‘intentional historical characterisation of art-making’. With the teaching of children in mind, we have further outlined the importance imitation has for learning, and its life-serving significance. Our discourse throughout has shown how to stimulate the essential notion of mimesis which is recognition and how in turn recognition can be constructed in meaningful diverse situations. At length we have examined ways to teach mimesis expansively and thoughtfully. Differences have been discussed between the representative and enacting attributes of mimesis. In a practical manner we have demonstrated how children can mimetically create art. Educationally, it is the children’s own sensitivity and outlook that must be engaged and supported, but through a process which helps them to identify, realise, and develop representation-enactment qualities in their constructions. What the child configures mimetically, we all can recognise as derivative and exemplary of real life whether that be in a story about robots, otters or happiness. Mimesis is an extant and thriving practice. I believe that there is every reason why we should be proud of mimetic production in art education, as it is not only natural and pleasurable for the child. It is also common in life and seems to be indisputably adroit, proper and essential for ruling on some of the things in this world that are true of it.
CHAPTER 2

ART AS EXPERIENCE

John Dewey

“The aesthetic is a way of articulating experience” (Alexander, 1987, p. 250).

Abstract

Discerning from the beginning to its end, Art as Experience is still one of the most comprehensive thesis for art educators and policy makers alike. Testing, questioning, and tough, it examines what embodies a thriving and healthy society, and argues that art education is essential to such conditions. Dewey claims correctly that art education can never be a literal experience, a leveller, a rule, a matter of reason alone or a moral function and cannot be governed by charts, bureaucracy, conventionality, and statistics. For education this has major consequences about how art should be taught. Dewey is adamant: art is in the lead in what constitutes new vision. To be able to pluck the benefits of this art for our social system of education, Dewey maintains, as this chapter will explore, that art teaching must revolve around what Art as Experience evokes in its nature.

Introduction

Dewey was seventy-five when he wrote Art as Experience in 1934 (Jackson, 1998, p. xi). The aim of this chapter is to give an interpretation, albeit a partial one, of this outstanding work. I will discuss how Dewey underlines art education with its own connecting importance. He is unyielding, however, that art education does not just happen; it has to be harnessed and taught, where “in the very substance of art” (Dewey, 1980, p. 212) it reverberates with the hustle and bustle, expansion and renewal, tempo and industry of the present in experience.

A programme of education for Dewey must be conducive to students’ capabilities, interests and accumulated handling of their past experiences, open to and realisable in a social environment which nurtures a “wider and better balanced environment than that by which the young would be likely, if left to themselves to be influenced” (Dewey, 1944, p. 22). It is prudent to say that his position, as much in evidence in his Democracy and Education, theorises a democratic social constructive process that is compatible with the student’s free capacity to enjoy, act, and think intelligibly. An educational environment where the student develops their experience of living together with others, taking an active part in educational opportunities, influencing events, and strengthening commitments all within the certainty that their experiences
matter. This last point, that student experiences matter, has an all important place in *Art as Experience*.

To meet these challenges Dewey wants to underpin the arts in education with a “pragmatic pedagogy” (Biestra, 1995, p. 105) that motivates and galvanises. A social democratic educational environment for Dewey that includes art education is a pulsating, cooperative, coordinating, and modified process in harmony with the world around it (Dewey, 1944, p. 10-22). Dewey believes that art education reflects the wider and fuller expansion of individual and community sympathies and values. Relying on recognised and well respected historical and current examples at the time when he was writing *Art as Experience*, he attempts to explain how art excels in human becoming to stimulate and expand our lives. We have to ask that if art education is as germane as he claims it to be, he must demonstrate its public service. How does he do this?

Let us note that in *Art as Experience* Dewey has a number of intentions. Firstly, he confronts what prevents art as experience. This point is sometimes overlooked by theorists, policy makers, politicians, and teachers. Why should we see this as an issue not to be overlooked? There are reasons for us to discuss this, not least because Dewey perceives it as a disconcerting problem for art in education. Secondly, he wants to demonstrate that the course of art in education should be continuous with natural impulses, community values, and everyday experiences which influence the students’ artwork and our environment in a variety of ways. Thirdly, he wants to show some of the processes of art production and execution and fourthly, why art as experience is valuable for a democratic social life and education. Dewey propounds that our ordinary experiences strengthen the teaching of art, manifesting some of our more cherished social actions and sympathies. Ordinary experiences are derivative of common feelings that can prompt the reshaping and protection of one’s environment. Art in education is to communicate the character of our everyday experiences in the world with resonance and reverberation.

This chapter is broken down into two sections. First, I will discuss what impedes art as an experience for Dewey. Second, I will discuss what Dewey means by experience in art, and concordantly why natural impulses, culture, the environment and everyday experiences must act as dominant centripetal fields in art education.

I

*Barriers which can Obstruct Art as an Experience*

Dewey does not agree that morality can be the sole rule-giving ground for art education. This is not without precedent. Aristotle in his *Poetics* writes that “there is not the same kind of correctness in poetry as in politics, or indeed in any other art” (Aristotle, 1984, Book 25, p. 2337). The grandfather of Western philosophy, Plato, never pretended that art could function as a model of morality, for the obvious reason that art dispenses the particular and not the universal. In Book Ten of *The Republic* he implies that some art always has a particular place, event, person, colour, or theme it has in mind when it tackles the appearance of an ‘object’. A student has a particular bed design they want to make as a model or in a
short story they have written they describe a particular person in some detail. Teaching art involves quintessentially how the artwork looks and how it is being performed. Our student gains local knowledge of their ‘object’ by forming impressions of it that oscillates with its mode of production. Dealing only with the way the student supposedly creates an image of their object and its effects and the further fact that appearances can be variable may manifest “ethically reprehensible attitudes” (Gaut, 2001, p. 183).

To implement unmitigated moralising pressure upon art education suggests to Dewey that it can “miss a sense of the way in which art exercises its human function” (Dewey, 1980, p. 346). One of the ways this can happen is when we “treat works of art as a kind of sublimated Aesop’s fables” (Dewey, 1980, p. 346). Art education becomes bound to a clear case of moral obligation. We could then endorse a programme of art teaching that rests less on art as “receptive to the image at the moment it appears” (Bachelard, 1994, p.xiv), and more on whether the art experience is being guided by a fundamental principle of moral conduct. In a reference to Shakespeare’s plays, Dewey notes how a conventional morality can be “ingeniously extracted” (Dewey, 1980, p. 349) from it and, then, perhaps act as an account of it. The premise being that however dramatic the art is, didactically the work’s representation is turned into a scene for moral communication. This is its value. Our attention to Shakespeare can become satisfied by an indubitable conventional morality that regulates our judgements about the recognition of art. If moral standing overrides all aesthetic experiences “our eyes have been reduced to instruments with which to identify and to measure; hence we suffer a paucity of ideas that can be expressed in images and an incapacity to discover meaning in what we see” (Arnheim, 1974, p. 1).

The reality of life portrayed in art through the centuries has at times enraged the public. Was the Inquisition in the Counter-Reformation correct to demand from the Renaissance painter Paolo Veronese that he must remove the drunken figures and Germans in his painting the Wedding of Cana (1562-3)? Edouard Manet’s painting, Olympia (1863), or D.H. Lawrence’s novel, Lady Chatterley’s Lover, were in the past mocked as depraved works of art.

In Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Ariel returns singing:

“Where the bee sucks, there suck I;  
In a cowslip’s bell I lie;  
There I couch when owls do cry.  
On the bat’s back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merely shall I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.”

(Shakespeare’s, The Tempest, Act V, Scene I).

Are we to think that the merit of the above lines rests outside its art? Is a convincing impossibility preferable to an unconvincing possibility (Aristotle, 1984,
Book 25, p. 2339)? However fantastical Shakespeare’s language appears, some of the value of it for teaching is in its imaginative splendour. Vividly presented, Ariel’s enchanting imagery can act as a kind of regeneration of the world, an elemental evocation of being dreamily alive in the discourse of living. One feels emotionally the temperance of Ariel’s joyful mood. Shakespeare’s lines evoke a gentle world that may deepen a student’s experience.

Naturally, we would be most disturbed by any student who attempted to present in a painting, sculpture, dance, film, or story the admiration of a rape. A morally repugnant attitude displayed in an artwork will cast a shadow on its value, but it does not follow either that a morally ‘good’ attitude displayed in an artwork will make us think twice about it. Counterfactually, ought we to accept, though, that there can be a correspondence, for example, between the moral sentiment of a play and its art? The work of Charles Dickens, as much as Emily Brontë and many others, seem to express this connection. Furthermore, if we turn to our chapter in this book on Louis Arnaud Read, we will see have it is impossible to separate out in art teaching practice the interpenetration of moral sentiment.

Nonetheless, what Dewey is further intimating is how the ordinariness of life aesthetically experienced may also recommit us to a deepening ethical sense of existence. Our “tangled scenes of life are made more intelligible in aesthetic experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 290), because artistic perception is the product of a “clarified, coherent, and intensified or ‘impassioned’ experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 290). He does not believe, like many have, that aesthetic experience is specious but rather “directly precious” (Dewey, 1980, p. 293) because its mode of sense is proper to experience, truth, and spiritual being. For example, “Courbet often conveys the essence of a liquidity that saturates a landscape; Claude, that of the genius loci and of an arcadian scene; Constable, the essence of simple rural scenes of England; Utrillo, that of the buildings in a Paris street. Dramatists and novelists construct characters that extricate the essential from the incidental” (Dewey, 1980, p. 293-4). So “instead of fleeing from experience to a metaphysical realm, the material of experience is so rendered that it becomes the pregnant matter of a new experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 294). Similar to Aristotle, aesthetic experience is then defined by Dewey as a “mode of knowledge” (Dewey, 1980, p. 290).

Clearly, teaching has a moral duty of care, but what Dewey is also saying is that if we were to take Sophocles’ Antigone, for example, the effect of this poetic drama confronts us agonisingly with some of the customs and morality of ancient Greek society. We come to imagine Antigone’s strife intensely, compassionately, and comprehensively because Sophocles is able to paint a picture of her which is full of human pathos and thought. Underlying the human common qualities which we perceive as real in the drama is to note the spirit of the poem’s sanity and pertinence. The movement of the artist’s subject matter and the scenes we recognise as being part of our world in Antigone are, as Dewey stresses, being held together by our imaginative depth in direct proportion to the work’s arrangement and articulation. Sophocles realistically captures the difficulties and suffering of Antigone’s life. His description of Antigone is full of the kind of tension and tragic realism that can go on in our lives. Alone, Antigone feels that the state law is terribly unjust. In despair
she chooses death, rather than life. We experience the interhuman in the play because
the play creates a genuine conversational dialogue. Though fictional the play is
commensurate with human experience, and reminiscent of how we might envisage
events in the world unfolding when juxtaposed against certain political, ethical and
social demands. As we read Antigone, we become acting participants in it as if
we were being “lifted by our imagination into a union” (Todes, 2001, p. 143) with
the play’s dilemma. Sophocles never depersonalises, prearranges, undermines, or
withdraws the very vital reciprocity, self-realisation, and human existence of
Antigone. The characters in the play appear natural and true. This is part of the
play’s art: a “fiction that signifies great things” (Da Vinci 1989), the causes of
which are dependent upon an art education that can invoke “the power of what is
most deep-lying” (Dewey, 1980, p.71) in the control of the artistic material.
Conflict and awakening may seem at the heart of Sophocles’s depiction of Antigone.
This means for Dewey an art education nourished by life’s understanding of
sensitive imaginative creation and perception. We must be careful not to suggest
from this that artistic imagination and perception are outside of the true and the
false. The Aristotelian argument pertaining to imitation, as we have seen, would
exploit the fact that Sophocles’ Antigone as poetic drama enacts that “which the
direct speech of agents gets us as near as language can come to the nature of
significant action itself” (Halliwell, 1998, p. 54).

Two further claims are worth making about Sophocles’ Antigone and about art
education in general that reinforce Dewey’s examination. Firstly, Aristotle
remarks: “though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view
the most realistic representations of them in art” (Aristotle, 1984, Book 4, p. 2318).
The second point is that the delight that we can take from art can be “at the same
time learning—gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-
so” (Aristotle, 1984, Book 4, p. 2318). If we were to reduce a tragic play simply to
the level of its morality without its aesthetic imagistic qualities, without its
moments of pleasure and excitement, for instance, we would not be talking about
how Dewey perceives art as relevant for education. Like Aristotle, Dewey believed
that the character and the life of people as “they do and suffer” (Aristotle, 1984,
Book 1, p. 2316) indicated some of the natural form of art education. In a Deweyan
manner a work like Sophocles’ Antigone embodies the collective and individual
experience of a culture that is sometimes the most difficult to observe and feel. The
effect of this work connected with the problems it presents helps to break down
physical isolation and external contact bringing to pass our own experience, and
reorientation. This shows important consequence for Dewey, that art education can
have an instrumental value “operating in indirect channels” (Dewey, 1980, p. 139).

Art creation sometimes runs ahead of the true and the false, using imaginative
methods and experiences in the world to express the character of the event under
scrutiny with determinateness. “Poetry celebrates the diversity of the human soul,
but philosophy inculcates the correct principles of the best life” (Rosen, 2005, p.
354). Hence, in “this sense, poetry is like democracy, whereas philosophy is like
monarchy” (Rosen, 2005, p. 354). What Dewey realised, succinctly expressed by
Ernst Gombrich, but which Plato’s epistemology logically found of third-division
status was if: “we look out of the window we can see the view in a thousand different ways” (Gombrich, 1977, p. 331). The photograph, dance, poem or story which the student creates from looking out of the window “is charged with meanings that issue from intercourse with a common world” (Dewey, 1980, p. 306). The thousand and more ways to paint the view from an art class window means for Dewey that the student has to properly interrogate and express their genuine thoughts, perceptions, and feelings that are integral to what is being perceived. This life which affects the art-making process in education is not necessarily governed by general principles in the way that moral judgements might be. Our imagination, which comes from out of our lives, may be morally reprehensible but for Dewey its content may open questions of unrest as well as ease which he sees as being a check on society that also serves to attend to the enterprise of what an actualising and positive culture is supposed to be democratically. On this view, art education can have preparatory and instrumental value for moral contemplation.

As revelation externalised, art education teaches us further how to love life by the particular way it handles and transforms children’s vision. The relation between art and morality is one firm dimension of this. Yet another equally important orientation for Dewey is how the child creates a stormy sky in their drawings or creates an embroidery motif in a sample of cloth that in each case shows the child’s own sovereign attention to their work mingled with the spirit of their lives (Tanner, 2003). Aesthetic sensibility and training is not all-out moral sensibility and training. In Sophocles’ Antigone, we have discussed how Sophocles organises his language with a style that expresses the story’s sensory reality. But this cannot account for the ethical excellence of a lived life that presupposes something much more than “two apples, an onion, a pair of old shoes,...A couple of notes, a couple of musical notes. And suddenly it is as if the Absolute itself were hanging on the wall or in the air, radiating in all its splendour” (Comte-Sponville, 2005, p. 105). The sensory reality of two apples, an onion, a pair of old shoes and a couple of musical notes move towards “its own consummation through a connected series of varied incidents” (Dewey, 1980, p. 43). We tend to see art education as a fulfilment of the child’s concrete human interaction with their imagistic capabilities. Its strength lies not in exercising principles whose moral purpose can burden art to the abstract and hence not art at all, but in eliciting imaginative vision through artistic devices that are open to aesthetic qualities in experience “which from it proceeds the liberating and uniting power of art” (Dewey, 1980, p. 349). Dewey does not see art education as having to be allegorical in kind, of which Goya’s The Nude Maja (1800) is a case in point. So, while he favours an art education accompanied by sensitiveness to moral sentiment, reasoning, and behaviour, he also sees that art as an experience sets out from a human living context that cannot be subsumed by moral unfolding alone. It is essential to art education autonomy, in fact, that a song, dance, “poem and picture present material passed through the alembic of personal experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 82), which, as he further realises, concerns not overlooking one’s own experience and integration of it. A process which he goes
on to surmise enables the child to undergo and present to the world new experiences and meanings.

When Dewey claims that “the political and economic arts that may furnish security and competency are no warrants of a rich and abundant human life, save as they are attended by the flourishing of the arts that determine culture” (Dewey, 1980, p. 345), he is surmising that what the arts bring into a democratic social system of education is a richly endowed process of imaginative approbation that touches the emotions, values, and desires of people in ways our political, moral, and economic fundamentals cannot possible supply. “The imaginative endures because, while at first strange with respect to us, it is endurably familiar with respect to the nature of things” (Dewey, 1980, p. 269). Our own imaginative capacity relates to our perceiving ability, experience as experienced in the social life of beings. Humanity cries out for art because it satisfies and reinforces many common and quite ordinary qualities that have a special place in our lives in aesthetic perceptive ways. The child’s expressive acts in art education are fused with the qualities of their human becoming being stirred by the channels of “internal and intrinsic integration” (Dewey, 1980, p. 99), whose efforts are reaching for things and “directing locomotion” (Dewey, 1980, p. 100), bleeding with the common culture which manifests our own experience.

Can we disagree with Dewey when he maintains that our first “intimations of wide and large redirections of desire and purpose are of necessity imaginative” (Dewey, 1980, p. 349)? If, for example, we cannot imaginatively see the problems, pleasures and anxieties of our students, what kind of relationships with them can we have? While human production often requires imagination for technical and commercial usages, art, paradoxically, “is looked upon with distrust” (Dewey, 1980, p. 348), and in a world where “social divisions and barriers exist, practices and ideas that correspond to them fix meter and bounds, so that liberal action is placed under restraint” (Dewey, 1980, p. 348). He argues that if art were “an acknowledged power in human association and not treated as the pleasuring of an idle moment or as a means of ostentatious display, and were morals understood to be identical with every aspect of value that is shared in experience, the ‘problem’ of the relation of art and morals would not exist” (Dewey, 1980, p. 348). The individual experiences of the student viewed as freely self-moving, immediate, and common in respect to their own location will show their artistic reasoning to be morally imperfect. Yet, is this necessarily a flaw, given what art education as experience can absorb into itself as an expansion of our own being fostering a communities shared intimate life? To think that life can be divided up into only good and bad features, right and wrong, the criminal and the saint, black and white, whiter than white, and “sheep and goats” (Dewey, 1980, p. 348) suggests to Dewey that if moral beliefs are determined in this way, they will inhibit human flourishing and the forgetting of a child with his or her own horizon and perceptual experience of the world.

As claimed, Dewey’s thesis relates to the way our environment governs art education. It is characteristic of our environment that “experience is a matter of the interactions of organism with its environment that is human as well as physical,
that includes the material of tradition and institutions, as well as local surroundings” (Dewey, 1980, p. 246). Art education projects itself through its environment and is, in turn, affected by it in a common community of life. An environment that is democratically interacting and socially concerned for art stands in response to it and becomes enlightened by it. Our life is dependent on its environment, so that our environment survives in the concrete comprehension and many-faceted world of human experience. The greatest threats and possibilities for art education must, therefore, come from what our environment holds.

Consequently, according to Dewey, an environment which minimises human experience will reinforce intolerances not suited for the expansion of human sympathies. Differences become difficult to tolerate and for the child deprived of difference, becoming different by “what grows by itself” (Irigaray, 2002, p. 112) is part of what Luce Irigaray goes on to say is the real aspect of becoming. Maxine Greene notes that the supporting structures that exist in education “are not used to sustain a sense of agency among those they shelter; instead, they legitimate treatment, remediation, control—anything but difference and release” (Greene, 1995, p.41). Submitting simply to authority will prevent the child from knowing themselves. If we block the process that lets the teacher in to the secrets of the child’s life, how can they find ways that will inspire and acknowledge the child’s existence? Dewey thought that only a free and equal society could attain the capacity and compulsion to enter the interests of another culture, a process that involves a serious interaction with art, without which he envisages that a community’s lifestyle cannot cope with proper democracy, liberalism, and choice. How does art help democracy, liberalism, and choice? He reasons that a society will succeed as an environment imperfectly and govern itself incompetently if it cannot take unto itself a multitude of different perspectives that would make it rich in the arts of living experience. He is insistent that art should express freely the world we encounter in everyday existence as concretised gestures of human fulfilment. A vital part of education comes from what originates from children themselves as cumulative with their continuous unfolding and momentum in the world. Art education blossoms in an educational environment, argues Dewey, when it is infused with ordinary experiences that are natural to it, so that “the attitudes of the self are informed with meaning” (Dewey, 1980, p. 59). Art education must form a symmetry with life because this is the condition for having an experience of art that helps to refine and support democratic, liberal, and changing values.

Now, Dewey criticises art theory and connoisseurship for having developed critiques centering on the power of stardom, categorisation, bourgeois culture, manipulation, and intellectualism, which have put aside daily living, the feeling of poetry, the skin of emotion, the touch of petals, thorns, silks, and bodies. The ultimate test of any aesthetic experience for Dewey is in the actual, embodied meaning, as expressed in the common lives of people. However, he saw that the world of art is divided up between rich taste and poor taste, between high culture and low culture. There is the exhibitionism of art as an economic and culturally intellectual marketing tool. There is the art lover who owes his education to the
Louvre or the Tate Modern. We have the collector of art in search of rare items and the nouveau riche lifestyles displayed in countless newspapers and magazines. Likewise, we have the division of art between the contemplative and the useful arts and the wealth and celebrity status of individuals to determine prices and trends in art. There are the forces of nationalism, sectarianism, and purism that in different ways for him have further weakened the connection that “aesthetic perception is in the concrete” (Dewey, 1980, p. 10). When life is full of dangers and opportunities, when life can be narrow or widened, art feeds human experience making it “possible to carry to new and unprecedented heights that unity of sense and impulse” (Dewey, 1980, p. 22), that of fulfilment, continuity, and enrichment which is needed to avoid a segregating, unpleasureable, unspeaking, and unopening world.

Enriched by a repertoire of power and indifference the art world and the wider community, Dewey comments, both have downgraded aesthetic experiences. Art education has meaning only when: “instruction in the arts of life is something other than conveying information about them. It is a matter of communication and participation in the values of ordinary life by means of the imagination, and works of art are the most intimate and energetic means of aiding individuals to share in the arts of living. Civilisation is uncivil because human beings are divided into non-communicating sects, races, nations, classes and cliques” (Dewey, 1980, p. 336).

The net effect of all this, Dewey thinks, has been a betrayal of the human subject in art as the common normal experience for art education. Under these circumstances, he maintains, art education becomes deprived of its opening. Collapsed are the shared properties of life which may be active in art education as an experience through the whole person. Withered and now marginalised, art education as life positive finds itself in a dry well, bereft of normal aesthetic experiences. Life will then, for Dewey, press forward “anesthetic” living (Dewey, 1980, p. 62). When this happens, he intimates that art education becomes the economy of being, frail and an arbour of self-deprivation that then heightens unconsciously an inactive sense of our own bodies and that of the other. The lowering of poetic experience in art education Dewey interprets as a lowering of education achievement generally. The positive educational pathway that reunites living in relation to the environment for Dewey is when “vivid aesthetic experience” (Shusterman, 1995, p. 35) more effectively connects art education with our social life and human becoming. These vivid aesthetic experiences, he believes, help to safeguard ordinary experiences that add to the harmony, beauty, unity and creativity in our environment.

Aesthetic education starts “with the soil, air, and light out of which things aesthetically admirable arise” (Dewey, 1980, p. 12). The delightful sounds of a student playing the violin, the excitement of seeing a great grey owl, of smelling fragrant mornings when the air is full of scent, the compassion of children playing together, a hummingbird knocking its beak against one’s window, the measured way a student leaves visible in their painting a rock’s shape through colour, a poem written by a student recording his love for his mother, the sweet touch of a father’s kiss on his son’s cheek as his son goes to school, jet black pebbles found on a beach, the reading of a fairy tale, the pride taken in ancestral knowledge, or the
angelic voices of a school’s choir resonating along its corridors. Here we have the tangible significance of celebrating, the “valuable in things of everyday enjoyment” (Dewey, 1980, p. 11) but which may come as an extra rather than as the normal and substantive involvement of art and education in our environment. The Maori statues on Easter Island, Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam*, Rodin’s *Kiss*, Picasso’s *Guernica*, and Albert Camus’ *The Outsider* are just a few of the many thousands of examples that if we had time for in our deliberations would demonstrate how art does not isolate itself from the concrete world of reality and human becoming.

To summarise, Dewey is reminding us that the generative nature of art as experience starts with aesthetic perceptions. Conversely, he claims that a student may well “undergo sensations as mechanical stimuli or as irritated stimulations, without having a sense of the reality that is in them and behind them: in much of our experience our different senses do not unite to tell a common and enlarged story. We see without feeling; we hear, but only a second-hand report, second hand because” (Dewey, 1980, p. 21) it is not visual evidence on the listener’s part. Dewey goes on to enlighten us further of our aloofness in life: “we touch, but the contact remains tangential because it does not fuse with qualities of senses that go below the surface. We use the senses to arouse passion but not to fulfil the interest of insight, not because that interest is not potentially present in the exercise of sense but because we yield to conditions of living that force sense to remain an excitation on the surface” (Dewey, 1980, p. 21). Art education intervenes, maintains Dewey, to push through the values of ordinary deep experience.

We are now at the stage where we can indicate the factors which should influence an art syllabus on Dewey’s lines:

– The art teacher must produce “a change that will reduce the force of external pressure and will increase that of a sense of freedom and personal interest in the operation of production” (Dewey, 1980, p. 343). A teaching approach where the vision and the production is the student’s expressed work. To teach in ways knowing what the aesthetic brings to life and the resistant and tensional forces which can affect it. An art education that learns from its past but develops its own means of expression for its own time.

– The art teacher should create important class contact time for doing experimental work. Experimentation, Dewey argues, “open[s] up new fields of experience and disclose new aspects and qualities in familiar scenes and objects” (Dewey, 1980, p. 144). An art education environment where students are encouraged to handle a variety of materials, movements, sounds, styles, metaphors, images, gestures, and ideas in adventurous and unexpected ways. An environment where student are the source of art, exploring the world around them and interacting with it to discover new means of expression, methods of construction, and the production of new objects in a complete, integrating, and unified manner.

– An art education syllabus must be broad based and capable of nurturing fully, intimately, immediately, and energetically the student’s intelligent responses to the world. To create a teaching environment where students can share their lives and which brings students together whatever their culture and interests are.
Encouraging human becoming through art education means fostering and enriching the imagination, emotions, perceptions, and desires of students.

- Any syllabus in art education must be constructed to appreciate the preciousness of ordinary experiences. Experience transforms perception and production in artwork shaping the significance that belongs to it. Educational practice and policy must value and protect experience as experience concretely and extensively.

- To facilitate all operations of production in art education where “imaginative vision addressed to imaginative experience (not to set judgment) of possibilities that contrast with actual conditions. A sense of possibilities that are unrealized and that might be realised are when they are put in contrast with actual conditions, the most penetrating ‘criticism’ of the latter that can be made. It is by a sense of possibilities opening before us that we become aware of constrictions that hem us in and burdens that oppress” (Dewey, 1980, p. 346).

- The freedom to teach and to teach in different consummatory ways which inwardly and outwardly stimulate the forces of art as experience. In this respect, Dewey would insist that while art teaching must be directed towards the student and their yearnings; it must also be concerned with the outside world and the importance of social feeling. Art education at its core values enormously the student’s personality but a personality drive seeking only admiration may force a retreat into itself, resulting in too much self-love.

- In negotiation with students, Dewey’s art education syllabus implies a set of tasks, exercises, projects, and processes designed to tackle the existing world the student lives in. Producing artworks whose subject-matter, content, and expressiveness is keeping alive the feeling for a common world through experiences rendered by imagination.

- An art syllabus that attends to the poetic content of experience in life as a significant habit-forming aspect of the student’s work (Garrison, 1999, p. 216). Such teaching of art values qualitative judgements, “qualities-in-qualitative-relations” (Dewey, 1980, p. 308) concerned with the individual performance or object the student is creating or has created.

II

Art as an Experience and the Teaching of Art

To assure the world of the authentic experience of art education Dewey insists that “to understand the aesthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens: the sights that hold the crowd—the fire-engine rushing by; the machine excavating enormous holes in the earth” (Dewey, 1980, p. 5). The teaching of art is driven by the students’ involvement in the world, the appearance of things and their meanings. These are the provocations that excite visual images and the reciprocal processes of further hearing, touching, and moving that calls forth an emotion, a surge of action, an intensity of thought, a resumption of effort and an enlargement of perception. Thus, as Philip W. Jackson reveals, Dewey’s conception of art includes “the
continuity between experiences connected with the arts, on the one hand, and ordinary experience on the other” (Jackson, 1995, p.26). The student’s “position expresses the poised readiness of the live creature to meet the impact of surrounding forces, to meet so to endure and to persist, to extend or expand through undergoing” (Dewey, 1980, p. 212) responses apart from its own. The handling of direct experiences is how Dewey envisages the initial teaching of art to involve face-to-face direct contact engagement. It is an art education that must be steeped in community life and immediacy. This does not mean to copy, but rather that the world of art making is opened up to leave room for what can ordinarily be shared as an appropriate direct experience in perception. In direct experience the student is free to perceive “those potencies in things” (Dewey, 1980, p. 185) which evoke an aspect of the object in revelatory ways. Direct experiences are concretely accessible and are crammed with real life incidents, culture and reality important for social life. Dewey seems to be saying that any “extraction of what the subject matter has to say” (Dewey, 1980, p. 92) to us, should emanate from under the circumstances of direct experience in art education.

A few words are needed to explain how Dewey defines experience. There is a difference between an experience proper and the mere sensation of an experience which he describes as inchoate. “Things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into an experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 35). He is trying to show at this stage that the vague sensation of an experience fails to create a meaningful practical perception. “Things happen, but they are neither definitely included nor decisively excluded” (Dewey, 1980, p. 40). A vague sensation is an indistinguishable experience that does not live in our power to determine. It represents “no genuine initiation and conclusion” (Dewey, 1980, p. 40). It is without distinction. He invites us to think of this notion as an uneducated experience because it fails to exercise understanding and obligation.

On the other hand, an educational experience is an “organized” (Dewey, 1980, p. 40) interchange of effective action, self-movement and determination. It interacts with its environment knowingly, deliberately, consenting to it and alert of it. In recognition of Dewey, Harry S. Broudy writes of an experience that it “has a beginning, a development, a climax, and a resolution that rounds it off, thus making it stand out” (Broudy, 1994, p.33–34). The educational point for Dewey is that experience “is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication” (Dewey, 1980, p. 22). An experience therefore is memorable, connecting, accumulating, complete, and accomplishing. It often has a comprehending qualitative dimension: “a unity that gives it a name, that meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship” (Dewey, 1980, p. 37) or ‘remember that dance routine we performed at school yesterday’.

In Art as Experience ‘undergoing’ and ‘doing’ are key words that are continuously utilised by Dewey to further prove how an educated experience takes effect. The ‘undergoing’ element refers to receptivity, while the ‘doing’ element refers to action. Undergoing and doing form a relationship, a synergy in experience whose pattern and structure creates a perception. Perception requires, Dewey argues, the
interaction of undergoing and doing because this relationship produces perceptual activity and its consequences. Furthermore, “experience is limited by all the causes which interfere with perception of the relationship between undergoing and doing” (Dewey, 1980, p. 44). Perceptual insight is in proportion to the “scope and content of the relationships measure the significant content of an experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 44). “A child’s experience may be intense, but, because of lack of background from past experience, relations between undergoing and doing are only slightly grasped, and the experience does not have great depth or breadth” (Dewey, 1980, p. 44). Dewey insists that infrequent or excessive undergoing or doing will distort the student’s perceptions, when what is always needed is a balance. However, undergoing and doing must form part of the necessary habit activity of art practice in education that governs unity. Perception is the decisive action that is required in art activity. But why is this? “A painter must consciously undergo the effect of his every brush stroke or he will not be aware of what he is doing and where his work is going” (Dewey, 1980, p. 45). The doing and undergoing must be carried out “to the whole that he desires to produce” (Dewey, 1980, p. 45). There is a temptation here, however, to overemphasise the process of conscious undergoing and the finish product the student desires. Nevertheless, the qualitative differences we encounter in experiences that impact on our seeing, hearing, reading, dancing, and making can give rise to further differences in thoughts, ideas, emotions, and performances. Qualitative differences in art education elevate creative vision and lure the child into taking relevant action, the experience of which can modify and result in more sensuous, expressive, and imaginative presentations. All this happens within the framework of undergoing and doing, “as we manipulate, we touch and feel, as we look, we see; as we listen, we hear. The hand moves with the etching needle or with brush. The eye attends and reports the consequences of what is done” (Dewey, 1980, p. 49).

Dewey affirms that “an environment that is changed physically and spiritually demands new forms of expression” (Dewey, 1980, p. 303). Where “the very meaning of an important new movement in any art is that it expresses something new in human experience, some new mode of interaction of the live creature with his surroundings and hence the release of powers previously cramped or inert” (Dewey, 1980, p. 303–4). However, this new vision must indispensably protect itself by a “deliberate openness to life itself” (Dewey, 1980, p. 304). From this point of view the student’s vision will become contrived or corrupted if it is not seriously open to human challenges. Certainly the student in art education must be allowed to go their own way and “evoke the energy appropriate to its realization” (Dewey, 1980, p. 178) secured by a vision which is cooperative and completed by life. The art critic Mel Gooding on the painter Patrick Heron writes that: “shaping and re-shaping the house and its unique garden, he has been shaped by it; in occupying it, it has come to occupy him; it has become the ground of his creative being, the very centre of his vision and his imaginings” (Gooding, 2002, p. 8). Art education is a sponge as well as a fountain.

Some further enunciations of the common in my above remarks are in order. Dewey makes it plain that the “material out of which a work of art is composed
belongs to the common world rather than to a self, and yet there is self-expression in art because the self assimilates that material in a distinctive way to reissue it into the public world in a form that builds a new object” (Dewey, 1980, p. 107). In a number of his quotes already mentioned the common world involves those valuable things found in everyday enjoyment; like fixing a child’s bicycle or those moments when the teacher tells us a story that helps to light up the world for us. It is a good custom, argues Iris Murdoch in The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts, to see the world as it is and to look at these things which give light as discernibly important. Murdoch maintains that these things are precious to others and with oneself. In this way art education exhibits for Dewey less of life’s automatic rigid functioning and more of what is overflowing in children’s and adults’ perceptions that show how art as an experience unites people “in origin and destiny” (Dewey, 1980, p. 271).

Implicit in his conception of direct experience is one’s connecting immediate experience. In the normal course of events we thrive upon our immediate experiences, an instance of which is the student’s spontaneity in the making of their artwork. Unconstrained, unmediated, and unforced as this human action may be, the poet William Wordsworth is quite specific about it, mentioning in his preface to the Lyrical Ballads that immediate experiences in art have a ‘distinct purpose” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 935). When he sums up immediate experience as “the spontaneous overfull of feelings” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 935), we are taken by this intentional artistic expression but this is a less than transparent statement, since it designates on first view only the subjective.

Wordsworth clears the air for us by explaining how immediate experience can operate in art making in a practical way. He reveals how immediate experience is: (1) a “submission to a necessity” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 954), (2) a “state of subjection to an external object” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 954), and (3) a response to “objects as they exist and as re-acted upon by one’s own mind” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 954). Wordsworth adds that immediate experience in art creation requires “a fashioning through imagination” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 934), and the “impression of sense” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 955), which are “from repeated and regular feelings” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 935) that get “modified and directed by other thoughts” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 935). Immediate experiences are susceptible to the “shifting scenery of the mind” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 955). It would be an inaccuracy to conceive the ‘shifting scenery of the mind’ as an arbitrary process because the ‘shifting scenery of the mind’ is being governed by undergoing, doing, and perception.

An immediate experience comes into its own when as Wordsworth comments: “the more versatile the fancy the more original and striking” the image (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 955). From habit forming, prior experiences, imagination, interrogation, and “patient observation” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 955), Wordsworth, like Dewey, feels that a student’s immediate experiences are developed successively through self-movement. The overall effect is that these “processes of the imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or [by] abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses and thus enabling it to
re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 956). Wordsworth is insistent that we have to be enthused, be endowed, and take “delight in the spirit of life” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 937) in order to avoid “vulgarity and meanness” (Wordsworth, 1907, p. 937). Art education explores immediate experiences in order to see what gives the suspense and what bursts through actions, emotions, and thoughts. In the activity of art as an experience, coalesced are the constant comings and goings of individualised performances and visualisations, “through successive deeds there runs a sense of growing meaning conserved and accumulated towards an end that is felt as the accomplishment of a process” (Dewey, 1980, p. 39).

Suffice to say that what we should be attending to as teachers are the life moments that occupy children when they are playing in the school’s playground. When two children are playing a game of chess at school, when the children are handling spiders in a science class, when there is the school’s performance of a Christmas pantomime, and when one of the school’s classes visits a nature reserve. Experienced in imaginative ways these events and their impact on the child can drive and renew when rendering such incidents in representative and enacting ways, a love for ordinary life. These experiences define art education by showing art education to be alive to their scenes and meanings. A student in an art class is not only trained to notice these things but is also taught how to create a synergy of life and a synthesis of vitality that achieves a particular integration of receptivity and doing. A student who paints, performs, or writes a poem about their grandmother, friend, toothache, or cups on the table may be handling the ordinary with the particular feelings and thoughts of the child pursuing a common reality of educational practice.

To absorb life through direct immediate contact and to be aroused concomitantly by ordinary experiences which we can all share and value in different ways, are part of that ethos which characterises some of our social human warmth. If we doubt this then we doubt some of the real life of children’s growth. In moments when we doubt this and try to suppress these incidents as trivial in the world perhaps, then, we need to remind ourselves of its preciousness. Never withdrawn from view in the Lascaux Caves, for example, is ordinary life. Yet, what we are interested in knowing is why the Lascaux Cave paintings are more than a pathetic truth of the ordinary? The artwork on the walls and ceilings in the Lascaux caves show in some detail not just the anatomical correctness of different animals—their knees, tendons, hoofs,…and tongues—in a realistic fashion, but something further approaching an art which “explodes with a dark, blind power. Even Goya’s paintings of bullfights are but a vague echo of this passion” (Herbert, 1985, p. 11). Present in these artistic images are significant human experiences that are the sensitive wrestling of the perceptions they reveal. Images that are not just the finesse of execution in expression but a commitment to a higher aim operating as furtherance and accumulation, rendering an experience unified in a movement of intrinsic fulfilment (Dewey, 1980, p. 146). Would we say that these Lascaux artists have demonstrated, in their image-making constructions, a care for the human as the universal in the particular (Aristotle 1984, Book ? p. 2322 )? Reflecting on his
time in the Lascaux caves, it dawns on the poet Zbigniew Herbert the inner certitude of a communal perspective which imprints a human face and a concrete world that opens “to the Greek temples and the Gothic cathedrals. I walked towards them feeling the warm touch of the Lascaux painter on my palm” (Herbert, 1985, p. 17).

We have examined how art education responds when it is in contact with the world involving a student that acts and is acted upon. This means that effective art teaching relies on a correspondence between the standards peculiar to art itself and the standards desired by our cultural, institutional and ordinary experiences. Art education proves its worth mobilised by morality and mobilised by the child’s own imaginative acts informed by materials, perceptions, and ideas that are reciprocally grasped and gathered in sensitive, tangible, and accountable expressive ways as communal life that is close to us and widespread. The child is trained to form habits, limitations, meanings, and values in distinct purposeful ways. Direct and immediate experiences are at the forefront of Dewey’s proposal for teaching art in education. As discussed, different visions in art education relate to the forces operating in its environment as well as to the internal mechanisms, processes, and imaginative experiences that help the student to release and expand his or her own natural abilities to produce artwork which are steeped in the “underlying common elements of the experienced world” (Herbert, 1985, p. 248).

Our ordinary experiences have a natural dynamic for Dewey whose impulse, when dwelled upon and lived, affects the gestures, attitudes, and the reality of the child. In everyday experiences the elements of commonality and continuity of life are found. Social living is a key factor of Dewey’s democratic thinking. Art goes deeper than we think, and its human scent is felt strongly in the sweetness of ordinary scenes, when poems, performances, and pictures of daily life consummate the culture of social living, giving it much needed embrace. Art education in this sense reassures us surely of some of the truth of being that constantly needs rescuing. How tender, beautiful, and uniting is our world, and just how aware are we of what summons the qualities of real love in society? If Dewey is right, art education must operate from the child’s own aesthetic experiences to unite, break-open, free, and excite our modern sentiment for social living. It is the warmth of our aesthetic lives valued qualitatively in art education, which lovingly brings out the character of our world to benefit social living. Dewey, on the one hand, feels that the child’s engagement in ordinary experiences presents ever-fresh challenges for creative artwork, and on the other hand, that these experiences are earnestly important for the well-roundedness of a human being. His theory makes sense because it demonstrates the child’s creative involvement in undergoing and doing to generate an integrated, completed, and satisfying everyday experience of its subject matter in art educational practice. By explaining what art as an experience is, Dewey has further answered how art in education can produce a flourishing understanding of the temperament of its society. Not only does he show the development of experience in art education and the value of it, but he also discerns how art education can be instrumental. His claim that art education can make an enormous human contribution to democratic, social, and human understanding still stands out as a test for our education system.