Why We Need Arts Education
Revealing the Common Good: Making Theory and Practice Work Better

Howard Cannatella

This is a book that will be of interest to those who teach, know, care, theorise, administer, set policies and discuss the arts in education. Each chapter in this book makes various references to actual arts teaching practices. Teaching and learning examples figure prominently. Concrete teaching incidents are covered throughout the book. Various actual classroom teaching situations are given. Highlighted, at particular points, are arts teaching practices that demonstrate how the arts drive up standards in education generally and why teaching expertise in the arts can be seen as central to this. Teaching practices and theories in the arts overlap in applied ways. Current teaching and curriculum issues are debated. Teaching explanations expressing the actions, character and skills of an art, the knowledge claims, the truth relationships, ideas and conceptions in student focused contingent ways are discussed. Explored are learner-like, student-teacher dialogues, everyday shared common experiences of art, and the reverent pleasures and insights that correspondingly relate to how things are worked, felt and examined by students. Familiar, ordinary, cherished, touching, sensitive and dignified comprehensions are portrayed. In capacity strengthening ways, the book attends to the elevated, consensual, continuous, broad, united, narrow, enlarged, diverse, open, freed, lively, inventive, imaginative, deeper and richer horizons that exemplify how the arts in education, as a common good, contribute to society. This text argues persuasively why we should be teaching arts education more comprehensively in a public system of education and how we should be doing it.
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INTRODUCTION

Two yards of politeness do not make society for me.

Henry David Thoreau (2009, p. 328)

Art is an experience of awe and solace. Successive societies have viewed art as a significant source of pleasure and critical judgement. In order to show that art reflects our imagination, feeling, cognition, perception, culture and experience, what must it do? Of common unanimity it must represent the character of existence that is near to an equality of actual life. We only need to read Homer’s *Iliad* or visit the Louvre in Paris to unflinchingly acknowledge that art is fitted to this purpose. It is anachronistic to think otherwise. The customary feelings of delight and adoration accompanying the art experience when reading Homer’s *Iliad* or visiting the Louvre raises our spirits and reflects our consciousness and desires. Our entire personality and our entire feeling and thinking of the individual and society, the landscape and the lives that people lead is what art expresses. Crafted objects, theatre performances, festivals, state buildings, museums, concert halls, films, public art exhibitions, and frequent visits to one’s public library, suggest that art is socially beneficial. So much is crammed into so little when the poet Herbert Zbigniew sagaciously mentions of the Paleolithic Lascaux Cave paintings that no greatness in life can be separated from its support (Herbert, 1985, p. 17). As Arthur Schopenhauer (1995) suggests, art produces definite grades of our reality of the world. Moreover, of supporting relevance to the case I am going to make, is the unmistakeable fact that the arts have always been able to produce a glittering pedigree of constructive insights, experienced as “uplifting, redeeming and reconciling” (Küng, 1981, p. 27) productions which, as I have begun to imply, are of immense ethical importance, the way the arts perpetuate, enrich and transform the common good in life. Haida culture, in a variety of ways, has always drawn on the service of art as a common good. Other contemplations of the common good of art in life relates further to epoch radical producing works: Monteverdi’s *Vespers* 1610, Bach’s *St Matthew Passion* 1727, Rembrandt’s *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* 1661, Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* 1915, the choreographer George Balanchine (1902–83), Mondrian’s *Composition with Line (Pier and Ocean)* 1917, Duchamp’s *Fountain* 1917 and Picasso’s *Guernica* 1937. Not forgetting the accompaniment of more humble works of art that are just as important a commitment to the common good in life: Jan Frans Dael’s *Vase of Flowers, Grapes and Peaches* 1810, Samuel Palmer’s *A Cornfield by Moonlight with the Evening Star* 1830, Hans Christian Anderson’s *The Ugly Duckling* 1844, Mary Cassatt’s *The Bath* 1891–2, Carl Larsson’s *Hide-and-Seek* 1900, Laura Knight’s *Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring* 1943, and Louisa Mary Alcott’s *Little Women* 1868–69. Hence we can say
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that the value of art, as Hans Küng undisputably points out, ought be seen “against a nihilistic background” (Küng, 1981, p. 29) of inhumanity of being in the world.

However, we can trace back opposition to the value of art in society, which continues to this day, to Plato. Wise as Plato was, I view as unforgiveable, the reductionist manner that cleverly enabled him to mock with marvelous, inartistic, overpowering skill an art’s human affirmation and interpretation of the world (Nietzsche, 1968). Narrow-mindedly, Plato dupes us into believing that Homer and the other noted poets that he mentions in his Republic (1997) lead us astray. This would not matter so much if education came right out and dissociated itself from Plato’s thinking about art; if it stood behind its lectern with its written notes to explain why art education is of tremendous relevance to education in general.

The triumph of art in society comes from community demands for it that have noticed how art can promote improvements in life due to what is learnt from art. Our attraction to art comes from the performances, tones, pitches, rhythms, evocations, gestures, images, forms, shapes, reasons, pathos, sentiments, visions, voices, ideas and articulations of an art that concomitantly represent different, compassionate, public interests of life. Anthony Storr (1992, p. 1–4) states accurately that the arts enhance our feeling of personal worth, that they enable us to comprehend ourselves and our external world in ways that touch the core of our physical, emotional and mental being, temporarily transforming our whole existence befitting of intense and common, pleasureably, shared experiences that concomittently increase our capacity for dealing effectively with social tasks and relationships which make up our lives.

To substantially value art requires access to the teaching of it in education. Access to art education was made possible by the world of art, by universal literacy in society, by on-going democratic political reforms, by meeting industrial, commercial and social economic demands and by the unveiling of a public school system of education during the nineteenth century (Efland, 1990), driving access to art education that became widespread after the Second World War.

There have been considerable improvements in pedagogical curriculum design thinking, teaching methods, school choices and professionalization standards that have driven more regulated, operational and accountable systems in education since the Second World War. These changes owe much to Dewey’s 1916 monumental work Democracy and Education (1944). Yet we seem to be going backwards not forwards for art was once a revered traditional subject but it is not anymore. Access to any reasonable instruction of an art continues to vary enormously from school-to-school, district-to-district, city-to-city, state-to-state and from country-to-country. Citing research from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM, 2014), the concert pianist James Rhodes, in a letter to a national newspaper in 2014, mentions how children from disadvantaged backgrounds face enormous inequality in accessing music education. In the National Society for Education in Art and Design Survey Report (2014), its findings seem to mirror what Elliot Eisner (2005), in early published work noted, that art, craft and design education in the US was a negligible subject in a school’s curriculum. Inequality was also an issue that the President’s
Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (2011), recognised in relation to access to the arts. This report also mentions that the “arts in schools are on a downward trend”, finding that federal and state governments should abandon the current policy of “allowing” the arts as an expenditure of a comprehensive educational system in favour of giving them a more robust place in it on the premise that the nation’s capability requires a workforce that is resourceful, inventive and creative which is best fostered through the arts. The call for arts education is not just coming from the arts; science disciplines such as medical education are calling for student doctors to have some formal education in the arts (medical humanities) believing that doctors need a comprehensive education to enable them to become better doctors (Batistatou, 2010; Gordon, 2005).

One might conclude that a watershed has been reached about the beneficial effects of what art education in a public system of education contributes. The arts help us understand our social and personal lives better. Society, having made so many social advances through the arts, is globally recapitulating today, drawing back from this culture and student’s educational access to it. Should we be outraged that art which is founded on human affairs, common life and conversation is being woefully ignored in education? Is art not a model that is dependent upon peoples’ conditions and experiences? Suffice to say that the misfortunes of anyone’s education is not to have realised the social importance of art and how art, makes us feel. Dismissive we have become of finer things. How art makes us feel shouldn’t be taken lightly bearing in mind how much it can affect our human conduct in the world. It seems sensible to recognise how near to perfection art expresses being in the world and doesn’t this make it educationally an important issue? Good and evil and everything in-between consisting of: vanity, vehemence, ugliness, ignorance, hatred, insensitivity, snobbery, sorrow, uneasiness, compassion, kindness, softness, hardness, transparency, calmness, soothiness, joyfulness, cheerfulness, beauty, love, excitement, fun, nature, relaxation, delicacy, melody, mellowness, wonder, grace, colour, eloquence, drama, play, concern, helpfulness, reassurance, peacefulness, puzzlement, coldness, fragility, brokenness, bitterness, boldness, greed, boastfulness, rudeness, industry, fright, incredulity, fancifulness, flirtatiousness, misogyny, reclusivity, determinedness, cleverness, criticism, subtlety, murkiness, unluckiness, reliability, pathos, decadence, death, birth, braveness, poverty, observance, regretfulness, selfishness, idleness, foolishness, destruction, power, passion, fractiousness, malfeasance, and calamity, for example, are the spectacles of art communication.

Art education should concern us all because art education can drive up standards in education and be central to them. It is this proposition that I intend to examine. Art education, Martha Nussbaum suggests, is “reading for life”. Quoting Charles Dickens, Nussbaum (1990, p. 230) mentions that when beaten by his stepfather and cut off from the love and care of his mother, David Copperfield finds himself sitting on a bed reading as if for life. Not so different from this is how John Stuart Mill in his autobiography explains briefly how art transformed, enlightened and saved him from a zombie like existence of living, made him feel more human and sympathetic
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to the world. The arts, David Hume (1965, p. 27) argues correctly, “draw off the mind from the hurry of business”. Are we being therefore hoodwinked into believing wrongly that subjective experiences, as Mary Midgley (2014) argues, are becoming an irrelevance to being in the world turning “to check the sallies of the imagination and reduce every expression to geometric truth and exactness” (Hume, 1965, p. 7), which as David Hume goes on to comment further, in his 1757 essay Of the Standard of Taste, makes art insipid, negating the many circumstances to be compared in existence when “our judgement will be strengthen by this exercise. We shall form juster notions of life” (Hume, 1965, p. 27).

I am going to address why we should be teaching art education more comprehensively in our public system of education and how should we be doing this. While a patchy educational delivery of art education and the accompanying embarrassing, infrequent timetable arrangements for teaching art (Eisner, 2005) is hardly helpful to demonstrating what art in education could achieve, this in itself is not a good enough reason for teaching art in an extended way in education. But a good reason why art education should be extended in education would be a pedagogy of teaching art that pays much more attention to the moral good of art education for life.

Productions and discussions about art can focus on self-centred, self-serving demands. For example, in teaching ‘the virtues of ambiguity in art’ or in teaching the skills of a particular art, these concerns can ignore the more substantial educational view of art that says that art education, because it is intended for society, ought to be able to enlarge our common understanding that is part of our humanity, of our shared existence in the world expressing life’s social aesthetic pleasures. The autonomy of art is also not a convincing reason why we should teach art to a reasonable degree in a public system of education. However good a five-star programme of art education in this school, college or university is consistently rated, a public system of education supporting a faculty of art in education along art-for-arts-sake curriculum lines, for instance, would be seen clearly as too narrow a domain for a public education system to ambitiously support. In the melting pot of art creation, autonomy is vital, but society is never appreciative of art production and performances until such art shows itself anchored in human associations of social life. Art achievement and its value have to contribute to the common good in the same way that science, maths and business must do. The role of art education is to show how valuable art is to society.

Currently, various art educational groups, educational professionals in general and various practicing artists and art societies work well together as a unit overseeing the curriculum of art, where there has been a continuing view of art education with much merit to it that has focused on discipline-based, free-expression, and more artists and industry in schools and colleges, for example, as one set of on-going art educational reforms. Other reforms that impact just as importantly on art education are arts’ curriculum design thinking, pedagogical standards, criteria led outcomes, benchmarks, cognitive and social psychological development theories, ethical commitments,
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administrative procedures, academic reports, teaching inspections, parent-teacher committees, governing bodies, and data collection statistical processes.

The teaching of art in education involves a material, text, activity and form-focused, fixed attention and discriminatory approach. Key ideas and conceptions of art, skill based exercises, discipline-based, knowledge based and critical, cultural and contextual thinking can be found in lots of art curriculum design plans, together with self-directed, experimenting, experiential, subject-specific, workshop, theatre, performance and studio based tasks, exercise and projects of art. To teach art well in education, also requires an understanding of student learning at elementary, high-school or college-university levels of public education. A diagnostic approach which is student-centered and which involves case studies in art teaching, special needs teaching, classroom management and skills, organization, processes and methods, assessment strategies, external assessor’s involvement, lesson planning, curriculum understanding, school visits and visiting performers, such as speakers, poets, ceramists and painters, substantively qualify what constitutes art education.

Such is my contention that although art education is designed to stimulate students’ productive, creative, discerning and rewarding reflections of art and life in learner-like social ways that are good for society overall, it is a claim neither sufficiently appreciated by education thinking in the round nor steered adequately in art education. Art education, through a social approach, needs more emphasizing in order to have a greater affect on public education. The continuous, developing and regular instruction of art in education and the pursuit of its legitimacy requires a good account of its social relevance and pedagogy. Art in education would benefit from more socially reconstructed enriching programmes of art in order to address the fact that there is little public awareness of the collective reasons why art education should be seen as essential. Until this situation changes, art education will continue to be sidelined.

This book is an attempt to paint a social picture of what art education offers society. Our culture acknowledges that art education is a part of our human understanding in the world, but pitifully rather sees it today, as Hegel (1988) predicted in his *Aesthetics*, as no longer a substantial and essential experience of life, no longer erudite and touching in its majesty. Perhaps it should be borne in mind, however, how deeply we cultivate and judge things that are amazing, exciting, beautiful, pleasurable, of human skill, of our spirit, redeeming, concerned with human relationships, sensitive and of being in the world, which in human form, art in education explicates. Construing, recognizing, transforming, creating and elucidating our conceptions and experiences of life through art education notably in literature, poetry, dance, music, theatre, fashion, textiles, design, architecture, crafts, film, photography, sculpture and painting, for example, involves our human sympathetic feelings. By paying greater attention to the multitude of diverse creative ways art education expresses the social and insisting that it primarily does so, makes our world and art education all the better. The demise of art education leads to the demise of human happiness.
CHAPTER 1

UTILITY

The Happiness Principle

Only the most superficial of people “could fail to realise what impressionism, fauvism, and expressionism, what cubism, futurism, constructivism, as well as dada and surrealism, have discovered for us by way of new horizons, bestowed on us by way of wealth of invention, revealed to us by way of bold experiment.”

(Küng, 1981, p. 18)

Without fear of contradiction, John Stuart Mill (1806–73) is acknowledged as an exceptional philosopher, political scientist, educationalist, social reformer and art lover. As a Utilitarian, Mill believed that human happiness involved the principle of utility. Utilitarianism is a theory that sets out to give an account of the permanent cause of our common and social human happiness in the world and of what stands in its way in terms of pain (Mill, 2007, p. 6–7). I am interested in exploring in a basic manner, one particular view of Utilitarianism. It is Mill’s utilitarian thinking involving the idea: “that our own lives and the institutions of society should be such that welfare overall is maximised” (Crisp, 1997, p. 173) expressing the “principle of utility, or as Bentham latterly called it, the great happiness principle” (Mill, 2007, p. 3). Utilitarianism was a new, radical, social, philosophical concept, progressive in its thinking and just what the world needed, as it illustrated the indispensable condition that welfare maximization overall was important for human happiness.

Not enough attention is paid to this concern in art education. I am going to apply this utilitarian claim of how we should live, being informed, as Mill suggests, by what art in education can offer as a capacity capable of confirming our communal life promoting as examples our human happiness in the world for everyone overall. Which means that art education programmes need to reflect and express the continuing commonest experiences of life that enable society to feel the verity of art accomplishment in welfare maximization overall satisfying ways. Mill’s utilitarian thinking involves why the arts, and therefore education about the arts, need cultivating in society, as he believed that this was a cause and a preserve of our common social human happiness.

What constitutes human happiness is the quality of life we experience and in association the quality of art we embrace knowing what the beneficence of an art educational experience means as a component of welfare maximisation overall. To reiterate, art education has to be able to substantiate and explain superiorly how art
activity and experiences adds to the quality of human life socially. This work in its entirety is an attempt to address these concerns.

For Mill, human happiness must benefit from art education and that means knowing what art education can contribute, how it is and why it is a suitable and meaningful experience for enjoying things that relate to the common good in life. Mill believed that the ‘great happiness principle’ affects and is affected by welfare maximisation overall and that art education was a vital part of the ‘great happiness principle’ because aesthetic life was one of the ‘higher qualities’ of human understanding that Mill noted was required in society for community happiness and its advancement. Mill surmises that the worth of an art’s education is related to how secure, capable, learner-like enabling and how valuable the higher qualities of art’s aesthetic education (involving intellectual, moral, social and sympathetic human feelings) contribute to the pleasure of the common good in life, not just momentarily but in longevity. What is taught should be useful throughout life, stay with us and be a constant source of pleasure and understanding. Education has overlooked how the arts in education are able to inculcate by fine strokes important, sensible touches of social life. This can be confirmed by how arts displays itself in common life. How art softens our passions, infuses and energizes our feelings, thoughts, ideas and imagination, arouses our interests and conversations, nourishes our attentions and pleasures, enlightens the mind about injustices, disgust, beauty and love, entertains the public, brings communities together through touching performances and representations, preserves continuity and change in life and creates admirable objects and buildings. The depth and extent of an art’s history, the current practices of art and developmental teaching approaches in an art’s education, were for Mill, indispensable signs of how art activity and experience can facilitate human happiness.

We take for granted the relevance of art when arguably we should not. Taking out of context something Hume mentions that relates to Mill’s way of thinking about the role of art in education is how art is “the conversational world joined to a social disposition and a taste for pleasure” (Hume, 1965, p. 38), showing such refinement that must have involved various exercises and discussions in education along the way, directing improvement through variety accustomed to common learning experiences that open pertinently the students’ eyes, ears and thoughts of positive status, shaken, mixed and stirred and staying with them informatively and joyfully throughout the student-adult life.

If we are to be convinced of this, Mill argues that definite and indefinite progressive improvements in an art’s education must perpetually deliver the distinctions, know-how and experiences of art that have a cumulative, consistent and regular effect on human happiness in socially agreed, intelligent ways. An art’s education, Mill thought, has to be teaching, examining and testing actions, activities, skills, ideas, concepts, knowledge and student’s experiences, in order for progression of the form-making, concept-making higher qualities of an art to shed light insightfully on human happiness. Mill also mentions that human happiness has to be free of pain but this does not mean that art is not a painful experience, as a tragedy can
be, for example, but rather that art must not be harmful to social well-being. Since aesthetic life affects the ‘great happiness principle’ teaching art has to be bound in pedagogically, instrumental ways to the notion of welfare maximization overall. I am going to extrapolate how the pedagogy of art education conjoined to our aesthetic human life facilitates the conception of this higher quality that Mill sees is an aspect of welfare maximization overall.

Teaching art in education implies that the teaching of art is incrementally related to advancing the higher qualities of a curriculum of art in education but, equally in teaching and learning the higher qualities of an art practice are also in turn promoting welfare maximisation overall conjoined to the ‘great happiness principle’. Teachers of art, the general public, educational policy makers and politicians need reassurance that the value of art education advances the ‘higher qualities’ of an art, favourably and readily serves the common good in life. How this is to be achieved, I have started to explain. Mill believed that art activity plays an active role in the quality of life in the world that hitherto maximizes human happiness overall. For the pleasure taken from an art production, he argued, can promote great joy, consolation and beauty that in commonly agreed cultural ways cements the role of art in society. Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Hume, Mill, John Dewey, Iris Murdoch and Martha Nussbaum, for example, have stated that art activity is a mark of good character when touched by the common occurrences of life, of the soundest judgements improving our sensibility having taken a higher interest in life’s pleasurable, moral, social, intellectual and practical concerns.

In his art papers, in his autobiography and in extracts of other published works of his, Mill expounds how art plays an active role in the quality of life that hitherto facilitates maximisation of human happiness overall. For the pleasure taken from an art production, Mill claimed, could enter into the spirit of a person’s character, attitudes, intellect and their concerns of fair play and justice in the world. Such a production could promote reasonable conceptions of wrecked, tormented or mischievous lives, of the virtues people display, of the relieving experience of an art, the affirmation, negation and synthesis of irrepressible and surprising common feelings for life, of things serene, attractive, celebrated, simple and grand, reviving life’s being in the world, encouraging cheerfulness and human happiness. The merits of discussing, for example, in a class of how Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad* shows prudence, love, courage, ferocity, cunning and obsession. Such humanity we applaud because of the plausible and realistic account of Homer’s narrative that correspondingly conveys what is beneficial to discuss; of art adapted to life. A student’s self-consciousness of art in education, can heighten and elevate their thoughts in experience, drawing attention to issues that can affect their social and personal existence, arousing feelings of security, energy, insight, and obligation that aptly affects their ideas, affections, beliefs and properties and character of their own art production work. To read some of the novels of Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, Emile Zola, John Steinbeck, Charlotte Brontë and Margaret Drabble, for example, is surely to realise and compare how the superior intelligence of such writing is adapted justly to the power of sympathizing with certain human beings as generally portrayed in self-
regarding ways in these novels, which can then arouse our own feelings sufficiently to strengthen our own social-obligations (Mill, 2007, p. 44). Key thoughts in Mill’s philosophy of human happiness are safety, equality, liberty, commonality, superior qualities and fraternity. To read Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* and be moved by it is advantageous to society.

Art, Mill surmised, can encourage the loving character of a person to blossom or unburden their problems when grasping the conception of an object or scene that makes them laugh or through the quality of an unselfish act of moral commitment portrayed through an art performance that people experience cathartically. By noticing the moonlight, the milking of a cow, a knitting bag in a figure’s hand and a snowflake on the window pane that answers to understanding, meaning and joy for the way in which the art work portrays such objects as a source of an aesthetic appreciation that reminds us of our everyday pleasures. An art production can lift one’s burden, enabling us to see and feel relaxed; enjoying the self-consoling fantasy experience presented in J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, for example, a forgetfulness of ourselves and our selfishness too. Where else in an educational curriculum is there a “leading back of thought to belief in spirit” (Croce, 1968, p. xxiii)?

Art experiences, Mill certainly asserted, can as explained, provide reassurance, resolve, and heighten human existence in the world in order to perceive, calculate, please, disturb and instruct common things about the world. It is the higher qualities of an art activity expressing musically, theatrically, in dance and in poetry, for example, that can cement our human associations, perceive painful and pleasurable human experiences of life that cohere with our own thoughts that can convince us of our delights and human failings. Mill surmises that the value of art performances and productions are in proportion to how they attract our intense feelings, cogitations, imagination and human sympathies actualising desires and needs that are closer to our own thoughts. Art production creates vivid conceptions that can be imaginatively perceived in different ways to give the attached incidents of a life that in seeing it, hearing it and in reading it we can reflect what we have learnt from it. Mill saw that quality in art has to relate to life’s higher aesthetic sensibilities, conceptions and feelings that express human happiness, displaying and explaining what generates its satisfactory possession as being good for us and what hinders its acceptance due to the meanness, confusion, ignorance, insensitivity and prejudice of life, for example. He saw higher aesthetic concerns as essential to furthering welfare maximisation overall and the ‘great happiness principle’.

When a student gets excited in an art class it can be a relief to their mind to find out that other students in the art class share similar feelings about the art exercise. A class can have in common their own self-consciousness of the world that in turn can stimulate elevated thoughts arousing correspondingly their happiness and admiration as the features and qualities of a student art performance or production are created to make outward impressions vivid, distinct and meaningful.

Cognition, being obviously important for human happiness, has considerable bearing on the quality of the student’s enjoyment conjoined to the art work’s value
and understanding. Students are encouraged in education to see, imagine and hear loving characters in a novel, or something in the art’s representation that enables them to forget as previously mentioned their own personal problems through the expressed laughable scenes, jocund voices, connected catharsisism and of the self-realised quality of an unselfish act portrayed in a drama. An art experience becomes a source of energy taken from the art activity that lifts the students’ spirits in ways that they can return to see more of it and do more with it, a self-consoling experience of letting be in order to reveal, as Heidegger (1993) mentions in his *The Origin of the Work of Art*, thinking which gives way to unmasking, unearthing, imparting and telling, of what an art teacher would be interested in.

Without being explicit, Mill indicates that art education was of beneficial importance to society because it could advance the ‘higher qualities’ of welfare maximisation overall, expressing our human associations, the painful and the pleasurable human experiences of life that cohere with our own thoughts. However portrayed, a novel with pain expressed in it, when discussed in a class situation with facility, exactness and relevence, is hardly something that should escape anyone’s notice, be unexamined and not personally weighed. In association, the sympathy and conformity that to some extent reveal turns of thought requisite for student contemplation and improvement helps places oneself ‘in’ its point of view. By means of the art itself, the art work speaks to us informatively, appealing to our imagination and understanding, in ways that can enlarge our mental powers and happy existence. In this manner, student art production can create vivid conceptions that can be imaginatively perceived in different ways as the incidents of life essential to furthering welfare maximisation overall.

For example, art teachers look at or hear the student’s art work and find it to be impressive. I have been indicating how this is possible but further elucidation is needed. If the art produced by the student is impressive this is not simply because the student has carried out their exercise with the measurements or any other requirements that the teaching task has stipulated. For example, if the teacher of art tells the student that they are to write a ‘short story describing their Christmas holiday with a beginning, middle and an end to it’ and left it at that, the short stories handed in as a result of this exercise from the students probably would not be that impressive at all. Welfare maximization overall in this exercise has fallen by the wayside. To get it back on track we would be looking for those inputs from the teacher that excite student interest in the idea of the exercise. Student’s capabilities naturally affect their results, but how well the exercise was explained to them also correspondingly affects student’s achievements. Hence, to stimulate the class, the students’ understanding is in proportion to their being in the world and what they are capable of grasping and achieving are clearly teaching issues. Furthermore, having set this task we are going to have to know, as teachers, what such a task has got to do with common human happiness. This is an important realisation, one of many realisations that the teacher of art is familiar with as it connects to welfare maximization overall. For one of the essential conditions of any society is the experiences we share arising from
our common human happiness that affects in lots of different ways the practice of living a good life, of resolutions, disagreements and connections expressing what is colourful, funny, delightful, beautiful, sad, frustrating, relevant and exciting containing analogously “the states of mind produced by moral judgements” (Kant, 1928, p. 225).

We want the students to express the superior qualities of their aesthetic insight in connection to what belongs to the learning exercise. So in setting the theme for a short essay entitled ‘Christmas Holiday’ it is necessary to introduce into this exercise, the forms of life that concern the kinds of ordinary incidents, observations and reflections involving the adopted, conventional, written language refinement that will aid the students’ self-identification of the good, the bad, the memorable and the routine in relation to their Christmas holiday. The kind of literature reading that the students are familiar with together with their previous submitted essays of a literary nature and showing some good, past student examples of this exercise will clearly help current student achievement in this matter. What these students are to describe imaginatively, in simple elevated ways as part of their education are the scenes, incidents, presents, people, games, weather, places, sport events, expectations, surprises, enjoyments, reflections and concerns, relating to their Christmas holiday, that are of a shared, common, social interest. The life accounts that the students then express become beneficial as these life accounts are tempered by thoughts and feelings comprising of their understanding owing to their experience, interest and capability for retaining and improving on reflection students’ happiness in life. These literary essays in a firm social-moral manner reveal how an art education can enable the students to become more aware of themselves, their personal deliberations and inclinations, paying regard to others, their circumstances and the world around them in interconnected, affective ways. In introducing this task, the student de-briefing thoughts after the event, teacher class feedback and in individual written comments, the teacher can highlight and reinforce to the students the value of the exercise where recognition of how one felt or did not feel, what one did or did not do, are important learner-like comprehensions and comparisons of character, temperament, behavior, objection, desire and delight. When making such conceptions involving further adjustments and reflections, that over time increases the power of certain acknowledged critical judgements and imagination acting in accordance with such exercise ends, the students become more mindful of themselves, their distinctions and their environment.

A student’s art work may be judged inaccurate when their work is presented for assessment purposes due to the fact that they did not include the correct measurements or any other requirement that the task demanded. This is not strictly an aesthetic matter until a student can make something and do something with the measurements in an aesthetic fashion. Knowing that the measurements of a glass beaker are one hundred and fifty millimetres in height by eighty millimetres in diameter only becomes an aesthetic issue when we use the measurements in an applied, imaginative, artistic manner. The measurements here do not state the actual
glass properties for the beaker, the thickness, heaviness and lightness of it, its shape, texture, decoration, colour or design. Students are expected to particularise and recognise in individual, art, learner-like ways, utilising the powers of their practical and creative thinking, what properties, ideas and qualities will produce the correct attributable effect in appearance of how aptly things should look, move, express or sound like, of how an appearance, for example, with such-and-such a look or sound appears frightening, for example.

The student in an art lesson is empowered to make decisions of their own because they have been encouraged by the teacher to think of art qualities, ideas and properties in certain conceptual-perceptual ways that will enable them to grasp the grounds springing from themselves that affects their own progress in their art activity connected to the general identity that the art task has defined. Human happiness, being influenced by superior qualities, is also related to the student being able to enlarge their feelings, actions, gestures and thoughts in respect to reasons and claims supporting their art. For the student that wants to exert more precisely in the displayed performance or in a poem, for example, a moral sentiment-benefit that has deliberately come from the envisaged way the art has been conceived and created, an art of this kind must have the formal peculiarities representative of the general state of the moral sentiment-benefit that the art has cultivated. As Berys Gaut (2007) mentions in his book *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, a sensitively recorded moral incident in a play can partly constitute the beauty of the art work. Beauty is synonymous with human happiness.

An art production “can express and develop our understanding of who we are and of what matters to us—a thought that Hegel developed in his idea of art as the articulation of a culture’s self-understanding” (Gaut, 2007, p. 6). Gaut’s account of art certainly signifies the common good since we see the value of art at times when it explores moral issues that are part of a larger share of public moral value in life. It expresses human happiness from the ordinary, rare and the particular in a common conveyed quality of an art tackling such issues in satisfying moving ways, which shows socially good and bad motives and actions, argues Martha Nussbaum (1996) in *The Fragility of Goodness*.

For a utilitarian like Mill, what is the right or wrong thing to do, in general, involves perceptions in the concrete (Mill, 2007, p. 2) that strengthen our values in moral, intellectual, aesthetic and social living. What is right and what is wrong for a student to do in an art class is a germane educational issue. To throw more light on the notions of right and wrong actions that can affect teaching judgements, Mill further suggests that right actions proportionately tend to promote human happiness and wrong actions proportionately tend to promote pain, frustration or suffering. Hence, while actions, rules and consequences matter in our lives, they only matter in a utilitarian fashion if they promote human happiness with everyone in mind overall. Educationally what this means is that in thinking about the actions that the student might take in various situations corresponding to art related practices, they become guided by teacher-public concerns which affect their actions. Because the
teacher of art is consistent in the way they handle art teaching issues and in the way they discuss issues of art with their students that correspond to the right kinds of actions and the contingent understanding, it enables the students to make progress and experience more common human happiness.

Why there can be justifiable enjoyment when what is produced by a student of art who decides to express a scene of pain or suffering in a painterly representative manner, whose image in its estimated magnitude and depth can correspondingly rectify the failure or defeat its pain or the suffering shown, is because as Aristotle mentions, the art is seen as redeeming due to the art’s portrayed performance proving to be cathartic, of what we have noticed to be of the sharpest aesthetic perception-cognition. I believe, for reasons that I have begun to state, that there is not enough debate explaining why art educational experiences are vital for a proper understanding of our world.

A corollary of Mill’s concept of human happiness that Roger Crisp explains is how: “Utilitarianism says not only that one should perform those actions that produce the most happiness, but that one’s very character should also be directed to the same end. In the later essay on Bentham, Mill expands on this notion. Mill sees morality as concerned not only with the regulation of actions, but with the self-education of the sentiments. This is so not merely because the student’s character affects the action-thought activity of the art creation, which in turn affects the level of happiness overall, though of course this matters. Rather, self-education is important in coming to understand the nature of happiness itself, and is itself a constituent of happiness” (Crisp, 1997, p. 11–12). A student can learn how ‘a house has character’ and how a novel’s qualities can describe within it a person’s personality reflecting who they are, for their smiles, wit, cheer, cheekiness, excitement, kindness, deviousness or dishonesty so portrayed in the novel, denotes a judgement we make of the character of them. Crisp is aware that Mill’s notion of self-education of the sentiments can seem to imply that an oligarch, a corrupt or selfish egoist can benefit from their own right actions as they self-conceive them. Noting this dilemma, Mill states that right actions “always act from the inducement of promoting the general interests in society” (Mill, 2007, p. 15). The validity of the students’ art judgements and that of the teachers’ art judgements in education conjointly involve welfare maximisation concerns. A curriculum of art in a utilitarian fashion, would know consequentially what an art can maximize in welfare flourishing ways with limits and opportunities leveling, increasing and proving ordinarily imposed standards that the art’s curriculum human associations in a consensual, collective, social manner can generate.

Right actions involve the interests of everyone agreeing to the common acts and obligations of the art curriculum so that “someone can act” accordingly (Williams, 1997, p. 46). We cannot be teaching art properly if only a few of the students in the class have the capabilities to act correctly. If only ten percent of the art class students are meeting the academic benchmark standards, something is wrong. Bearing in mind, in addition, that Mill remarks that the quality of art is an essential factor that facilitates welfare maximisation overall in society. Thus, if the students
are not expressing through experience how art production adds meaning to society, the students’ ability to act appropriately with feeling, imagination and understanding in the wider sphere of life, of things common which can affect numbness, blankness, dimness, vagueness, gentleness, uncompanionship, expressionist, noblest and loveliness actions of life, for example, will the student experience more frustration, helplessness, strangeness, weakness, darkness, isolation, pain and suffering?

Simon Blackburn remarks in relation to Utilitarianism: “just as a lot of crimes are committed in the name of liberty, so they can be committed in the name of the common happiness” (Blackburn, 2001, p. 89). So certainly art education should not fall head-over-heels into an art-for-arts sake regime of art activity. Just as it should not fall head-over-heels for a social and ethical regime of art, since no single factor explains fully the diverse productions of art that moves us freely or which we escape to and yet we need a society that regularly and standardly shows higher cooperation, rationality, moral values, human sympathetic feeling and aesthetic qualities.

How to estimate whether art educational welfare maximisation overall is successful, as I have been attempting to explain, is in proportion to the quality of art that the art curriculum standards and subject-matter content range has defined, the conjoined quality of the teaching pedagogy, the conjoined quality of the student’s experiences and the conjoined quality of the student’s produced art work, as factors together demonstrating such entailment. These factors together, under different arrangements, conditions, situations and circumstances contribute to the educational relevance of art in society. But for art education to demonstrate that welfare maximisation overall is being fully realised art education has to show, through examples of student work, the revealing student learner-like capacities attaining and enlarging the properties and characteristics of the ‘higher pleasures’ of human happiness.

Art in education has to know the quality of the art that is being taught, produced and learnt and “the most effective means for the inculcation” (Mill, 2007, p. 8) of the quality-experience of art in education. The purpose of any art exercise and the resulting, relevant art outcomes that make us sensible to it affect the right quality of teaching in art relating to the art exercise and the right student understanding-capacity and the right extent of the quality of the learning experience that the teaching is aiming to achieve. This does not mean that what is right about the X quality factor that the teaching is aiming for is numerical or formulaic, but rather that some reasons, concepts, imagination, properties and qualities, more than others, are stimulating the whole class and appealing to a shared standard about the art exercise requirements. Individual teaching input relating to different student ability levels and different student interests and their approaches furthers the success of the art exercise.

Bernard Williams states that morally “I may be under the obligation through no choice of mine…once I am under the obligation, there is no escaping it, and the fact that a given agent would prefer not to be in this system or bound to its rules will not excuse him or her” (Williams, 1997, p. 48). Clearly, children are obliged by law to go to school, which for good paternalistic reasons override the child’s choice in this instance: choosing whether to be educated or not to be educated is not a choice for the
child to make. Everyone agrees that education is good for children and there is much proof that this benefits their human happiness. However, Mill would further say that human happiness is only beneficial when we are able “to think more broadly about the special human capacities that contribute to happiness” (Noddings, 2005, p. 19).

Mill maintained that the quality of life for everyone should reconcile proportionately, with prudence, the happiness of others as well as that of our own happiness and the pursuit of it involving our happiness together in life communally to affect how welfare maximisation overall is being exercised and distributed, promoting the possibility of the general good in everyone and the good of the whole community (Mill, 2007, p. 15). Welfare maximisation overall was the best proof of a system that in proportion would enable human happiness to be realised potentially by all.

There are several further important adjustments that Mill makes to his notion of welfare maximisation overall, that I will go on to explore because it has to do with the idea of ‘quality’ that can bring home to us further an art’s educational relevance in the teaching of art. Before I do, even with these adjustments to his notion of human happiness, Kant produces a major objection to the notion of utility that also has a bearing on art teaching and student learning about art.

I have expressed the common enough idea that art activity must have its imaginative freedom, a caprice which Hegel suggested in his *Aesthetics* is lacking in the real world of practicalities. Part of Kant’s view is similar to this, that art creation is “incapable of resting on the representation [of] utility” (Kant, 1928, §. 15). Art is not *techne* but it has *techne* in it. Utility has a preconceived definite end, Kant declares, of what the art production is meant to be in the concrete. It has a universal rule, he thinks, determining what art should look like or be performed as. Kant argues, convincingly, that this is what will cramp the mind of art production and experience and contain it, stifling the need to enlarge the mental habits of art experience and understanding. I must feel the pleasure immediately in the art object, argues Kant, which means correctly that I cannot be talked into it “by any grounds of proof” (Kant, 1928, §. 34). But Kant, like Hume, believed that the best form of art production is always a personal, conjoined, higher, inner feeling and thought experience producing a near resemblance of the outward manifestation of the art reflecting the student’s sensibility relative to a subjective free conformity of understanding consisting of associated moral, intellectual, common pleasures and common human sympathies of life. The conceptual nature of this construct indicates a major difference between the way we teach art and the way we teach science. Yet, there is something odd about “I must feel the pleasure” in the art object if this is no more than a lethargic indolence incapable of recognising in variety why Isabel Rorick’s and Robert Davidson’s Haida hat object of 2003, Jackson Pollock’s 1948 *Summertime No.9a*, Picasso’s 1937 *Guernica*, Edgar Dega’s 1865 *A women with Chrysanthemums* and Jan Vermeer’s 1665 *The Artist in the Studio*, for example, are important works of art that for different reasons any delight that we might take from such art works must be attributed in part to their appearances and intentions. This is why, Kant argued, at the
very beginning of *The Critique of Judgement* that I must not only feel the pleasure of the art object I must also understand it “with a view to cognition by means of the imagination” while considering the art work. In addition, hasn’t art activity always used rules of one kind or another for determining a certain underlying principle of an art? A teacher of art would not object, for example, to different Aboriginal traditions, or Egyptian, Byzantine, Greek, Renaissance, Romantic, Impressionistic, Surrealist and Modernist conventions, whose philosophies involve facts, concepts, theories, ideas, criticisms and rules of an art.

A work of art “pleases freely on its own account” (Kant, 1928, §. 16). Is this to be regarded as an important human happiness principle? A utilitarian like Mill could not object to this and as he explores in his *Autobiography* (Mill, 2008, p. 74–100), it was such thinking that enabled him to overcome his mental depression. Much later in *The Critique of Judgement*, Kant says that an art’s work possesses a feeling connected to its quality that “adapts itself to our mode of taking it in” (Kant, 1928, §. 32). Either we find the art pleasurable or displeasurable, the effect of both conditions are founded on a subjective judgement of the shared value of the art. However, if “taste lays claim simply to autonomy” (Kant, 1928, §. 32) this can only be because we share similar thoughts about the art, where taste, for Kant, is referring to the quality of the art, that in a different but similar sense, Mill also expands upon discursively in a number of his works. Mill agrees that the imagination is essential to art activity, to human experience, concurring with Hegel that art activity and experience is also “one of the main ways in which human beings plumbs the depth of the world” revealing and actualizing him or herself, “reflected off the world as off a mirror” (Hegel, 1993, pp. xviii–xix). Art activity is not mere imitation and nor is it just mimetic activity as though these were the only aims of an art, but it is also a free productive force that confronts us with the common opinion that the task and aim of art is to bring home to us our sense, our feeling, and our inspiration everything which has a place in the human spirit. That familiar saying ‘nihil humani a me alienum puto’ [I count nothing human indifferent to me], art is supposed to make real in us” (Hegel, 1988, p. 46). How much of this paragraph alone is suggestive of how the quality of art cultivates the quality of life? It is worth discussing educationally that art is a mirror, that art is not a mirror, and that what is made real to us is the qualities that the art really does possess, as John Hyman (2006) discusses in *The Objective Eye* together with the arts ideas and concepts and what we deeply feel is moving about art as Iris Murdoch (1993) discusses in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* and Martha Nussbaum (1986) discusses in *the Fragility of Goodness*.

If our understanding of the quality of an art work contains what we feel is representative of our common human spirit and intelligence related to the appropriate pathos of the art and its refinement, a respect for moral ideals and moral feelings that Kant (1928) mentions in *The Critique of Judgment*, does art in education then have a wholesome notion, a certain understanding of life’s harmony, an infused serious reverence in the play of our common continuous life judgements that stand out about the world? Mill certainly thought so.
How is a teacher of art expected to teach art with a class full of children with easels, a dark room, potters wheels, sewing machines, a stage and with a group of fourteen year old students and their violins, who are confronted for the first time with learning to play Johann Pachelbel’s *Canon*? What will the students detect from the art teacher? What qualities, concepts and ideas in a teaching situation will students perceive from the teacher that will enable them to produce the kind of consequences that shows to them, that they are advancing, adjusting and being inspired by their teaching instruction?

In order to develop the quality expected in an art exercise, Dewey maintains that “if our view of the world consisted of a succession of momentary glimpses, it would be no view of the world nor anything in it. If the roar and the rushing stream of Niagara were limited to an instantaneous noise and peep, there would not be perceived the sound or sight of any object, much less of the particular object called Niagara Falls. It would not be grasped even as a noise. Nor would mere isolation continuation of the external noise beating on the ear effect anything except increased confusion. Nothing is perceived except when different senses work in relation with one another” (Dewey, 1980, p. 175). There is a clear sense in this that the student must go back to the art and revisit it, that the creation of art at times is not a quick observation or a quickly conceived thought. “The idea of attention or contemplation, of looking carefully at something and holding it…is moral training as well as preparation for a pleasurable life” (Murdoch, 1993, p. 3). From the art teacher in the class comes clarity and capability, the learner-like issues that will have an essential bearing on the art that they want the students to complete and that will involve the amount of information the students will need in order to achieve a more precise discrimination and conceiving by means of the connections, relations, contrasts and apprehensions adapted to the art task of a deeper study, performance and elevation.

Mill, like Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, recognised that art production “cuts fresh channels for thought, but it does not fill up such as it finds ready-made, but it traces, on the contrary, more deeply, broadly, and distinctively, those into which the current has spontaneously flowed” (Mill, 1897, p. 202). So if the art is the students’ construction, their self-consciousness, of their own desires and interest and of their own impulse and excitement, which is what Kant and Hegel imply art activity and experience involves, Mill can still agree with them but further maintains that quality in art matters to accomplish a higher standard of critical judgement, directing awareness and achievement in art education that is its substantial end.
CHAPTER 2

THE QUALITY OF ART

…the composer may draw on a huge repertory of available styles—old and new, sacred and secular—and may combine them at will. This freedom lies at the heart of extraordinary expressive power of the Vespers.

(Keyte & Parrott, 1984, p. 1)

Having introduced the idea of quality in art education it is time to investigate it further relating it more to a teaching context. The idea of quality in art is firmly connected to the idea of autonomy in art but the autonomy of art is not the whole cause that we need to be acquainted with as teachers in respect to the conditions concerning the quality of art that is produced in learner-like art educational ways. One of the most important aspects of utilitarianism which affects the teaching of art and learning quality is why we should “raise the floor of benefits as high as possible for our society…is to everyone’s benefit even if they benefit some more than others” (Slote, 1998, p. 99). How might the quality of art education benefit some students more than others may depend on the students’ interest, motivation, labor, strength of thought, imagination and prior experiences, for example. Interconnectedly, it will also depend on the students individually converting and transforming, for themselves, the teaching stimulation that has attempted to cause the relevant development of understanding and ideas so the students can act in conformity in a general way taking account of the actions, representations and concepts that will affect their performance and production.

We need to go back to Mill in order to reconsider how he perceives social, ethical, intellectual and aesthetic benefit in utilitarian ways. “The most effective means for the inculcation” of an estimated practice of art is “when we engage in a pursuit with a clear and precise conception of what we are pursuing as the first thing we need, instead of the last we are looking forward to” (Mill, 2007, p. 2). One of the first things I believe we need to pay more attention to is the social learner-like experiences of art in education. There is pedagogy to consider that involves, with the student in mind, how to deliver a quality learning environment of art in education. There is the reality of time constraining factors that affect what can be reasonably taught in education with only X number of hours available to teach art in an academic year.

Having a clear, precise conception of the teaching we are going to deliver, is an effective way of inculcating the ideas, thoughts and practices that proportionately relate to the idea of quality that the teacher wants the students in an art class, studio, workshop or theatre to realise and experience. It is a plain fact that if a student is
unable to focus on the issue at hand in an art lesson, they cannot be learning very much, if anything at all. However, the conversation we have with students begins with motivational issues that students can relate to, with art pictures and student’s paintings on walls, students being taken to classical music concerts, students being taken to a major theatre, ballet or modern dance performances, students playing their recorders in class and “look, listen, isn’t that pretty, isn’t that nice”? (Murdoch, 1993, p. 3).

Mill maintains that the principle we should use in deciding what kind of art activity to teach students involves the idea of welfare maximisation overall that in turn is conjoined to the ‘great happiness principle’. Since utilitarianism was a response to human happiness in life, Mill argued that our character, conduct and actions of the quality of our human happiness represented a moral standard of life, and at a system, character, conduct and action level, welfare in society had to consist of sharing more equally life’s “greatest happiness principle” (Mill, 2007, p. 3); the influence of utility. As previously pointed out, some students may benefit from welfare maximisation overall more than others. Some students will make more of their opportunities than others. But in an educational manner a curriculum of art and the teaching of art have to be delivered in an equal proportionate way to the entire student class. All students are treated equally in ethical ways. Thus, teaching the whole student group with attention given equally to each student in the class knowing their capabilities and concerns so that every student can make progress in the art lesson, experience the relevance and intensity of the art activity and the superior qualities of art would be one example of welfare maximization overall in art education enabling human happiness.

If we are considering what are the right actions to adopt this philosophy may start with; what does a teacher of art have to know when teaching music, dance, acting, literature and poetry, design, crafts, film, architecture, photography and fine art, for example, at a particular level? A teacher of art would have to know about the psychological and sociological contemporary currents that are related to learning issues. Teachers have to know about the ethics of teaching. They would have to know a little about the history of education and important pedagogical reformers. They would have to know about different pedagogical approaches. They would have to know about the pleasures and the beauty of an educational life. They would have to know about the students’ capabilities, their personalities and their sense of themselves. There is an educational love that the teacher must have for all their students. They would have to know something about the aims and purpose of education, and they would equally have to know about the instrumental, methodological, instructional and organisational aspects of a school, college and university curriculum of art, involving the attainment standards in teaching and learning appropriate to these institutions. Teachers need regularly to draw upon and share their teaching experiences amongst their colleagues in different focus-point team meetings in order to reach on-going consensus about changes that affect the teaching of art. These factors represent some of the scholarship, professionalism
and accountability measures of an education system. So all things considered, on
the face of it, art education looks nicely balanced when embracing these factors and
more besides, since they form part of the wealth and cognisance attributed to good
teaching in art. But focus-point team meetings in themselves may tell us nothing
in particular about the quality of art in education until the quality of art is part of
such an agenda. It is art that the art teacher is teaching. Various teaching practices
of art in education can struggle to get a proper hearing and produce a convincing
argument that consist in an agreement. Obviously there are many teaching aspects in
art education that interrelate along different lines. There is a curriculum of art that is
sequentially and developmentally designed to be accepted by everybody teaching art
and there are aspects in art education that profitably go their own separate ways to
explore different outlooks and produce different works of art by students in a class,
conservatory, studio or workshop environment.

Whatever the different teaching approaches that an art curriculum in its breadth
and depth requires, all art teaching abides and concurs with what the maximum
probable benefits from the curriculum range of devised student activities overall are.
Having curriculum knowledge and lesson planning understanding in art is clearly
beneficial. An arts curriculum content plays a substantive role determining what
actions and consequences are good, holding common judgements and commitments
about art that an art teacher knows substantially affects the successful production
of art in education in ways designed to strengthen, harness, improve and stretch the
student’s capabilities of art comprehension and production. The exercises of an art
curriculum connect strongly to prior student experiences, but not always necessarily
so, since new experiences may be very different from previous experiences, so that
different outlooks-practices have to be learnt anew.

A curriculum of art takes as a pedagogical given the students’ personal perceptions,
thoughts, actions and articulations, their responses, experiences and awareness in
this or that way in accordance to the required art exercise. A curriculum plan cannot
begin to appreciate that all students are different and that they have different character
traits. Without pedagogy, art examples, art experiences in the concrete, discussions
and training in art, the curriculum of art as presented to the inexperienced student,
will leave them empty of the correct habits they will need to form in order to advance
the best possible results that relate to the intentions of the art task in hand. The
students may know what the lesson intentions require but still have no idea how to
realise precisely its requirements and direct their actions and thinking efficiently,
particularly and productively.

Art curricula acknowledge that it is the students’ personal experiences and their
intellectual capabilities that have to be harnessed for the sake of the art task. The
sensible habits of actions, ideas, cooperation, and reflection contain the various
teaching and learning instances that affect progress in the art activity. A curriculum
states the art’s external requirements, but remains quiet about how to precisely teach
the art that its requirements demand. How to explore, play and think in certain ways;
how to appreciate ‘this’, take account of ‘this’, identify what ‘this’ entails and how
to imagine ‘this’, the art teaching task postulates in ways that have to be adequate to students’ understanding. This indicates further how important pedagogy is in education. The students’ ideas, actions and thoughts are left to the art teacher to approach in ways which support the students’ development in their art exercise. No curriculum of art states the conditions that will individually, particularly and singularly supply the sensuous imagery and cognition of the object-performance of the right sort of constructed movements, material techniques, actions, remarks and gestures for the student to observe, experience and reflect upon in a class. Adequate examples with explanations may be given to act as models that stir student thinking and appreciation but they are no substitute for the creative self-conscious mind fancying, struggling upwards and developing, the productive ideas of the student whose object emerges on its own account but not independent from the examples given. The examples given can act as the catalyst that induces the required kind of creative activity obtained through guidance that impresses the relevance of the examples and in connection the student adapted sympathetic cultivation of the art example that widens and deepens their understanding. Each student in a class is encouraged to discover things for themselves and to imaginatively project images, actions and thoughts in material and performance ways.

Art teachers recognise that the students’ own views of an art task affect how the teachers teach art. An art teacher knows what their students are generally thinking about because they have a continuous on-going dialogue with them about their art work. They will know what their students already know about art due to their past experiences and previous tasks. The art teacher knows what capabilities each student possesses through the accomplished performances and exercises they have completed as the prime evidence of their current achievement. They also know what they want to achieve in a class because they have discussed with the students what they intend to do and they know how the students are going to accomplish their end in view by what they have identified, explained, understood, shown in appearance and by the steps they are going to take in order to facilitate the performance, ideas and interpretations that the art task requires. They will know how the student is going to play this piece of music on the piano because they have agreed with them their approach, their reading of the music and because of their past performance of it. The art teacher knows what their students are actually contemplating as they reflect, produce and perform due to the actions that they take and due to changes in the art work that are more discriminately or less discriminately of what is required. The teacher will know if the students have understood what is required of them by asking questions of them, by addressing their questions, through a sequence of learner-like events that may pause in the middle to assess student understanding that then subsequently requires some further explanation from teacher enabling the student to become more familiar, for example, of some notable relevant quality, concept, action and idea. Equally, the teacher will moderate students’ work throughout the entire lesson for the relevant signs of student progress and understanding in order to appropriately correct, indicate, direct, encourage and discuss student learner-like
problem issues as they arise. All this requires an atmosphere, as Parsons and Blocker (1993) mention in *Aesthetics and Education*, of support, articulation, elaboration, reflection, acceptance and facilitation.

The student experiences in an art lesson contains important learner-like situations for the art teacher as well as obviously for the student. The art teacher understands an art curriculum in terms of the aims and outcomes of what its construct concerns, its rational justification and the merits of it stimulating the kind of evidence that are the targets-outcomes for a task. Hence, art teachers will know the range of experiences, ideas, performances and properties of the art activity that they know in reliable and correct ways, of the standard contributions from them that will typify students’ realisations of how certain processes, characteristics, performances and ideas for the art activity under given circumstances follows, that has resulted in the expected and the unexpected surprising results of the art production that has satisfied the various demands of the task.

It is also to be noted that the art teacher discusses the required and particular kind of receptivity that the task’s intentions demand from the student. Yet the levity of this occurs when the student becomes more aware and adjusts to the art teaching perspective that is artistically encouraging how different inferences, tones, interpretations and intonations can be made in justifiable ways by the student. Setting the scene that prudently becomes restricted due to prior experiences, capabilities and the art work’s objectives are standard aspects of what an art teacher does. Such attentiveness by the teacher of art advances, in an underlying way, the measure and scale of the students’ self-determining learner-like actions, their recall and focusing powers bringing into play the students’ estimated common understanding of a certain practice of art that in an enhanced and enabling manner the art teacher has directed. Students derive a lot of enjoyment from what they are able to achieve, which is an important aspect of pedagogy.

I have been partly explaining the general kind of right actions and their nuances that a teacher of art recommends to their students in a class. Mill thought of right actions as being in proportion to the common good and characteristic of welfare maximisation overall. Importantly, whatever the right actions are, they enable students to acquire the higher qualities for realising, entertaining, promoting and increasing human happiness conducive to the common good. High qualities are the discernible results of students deploying their intellectual, aesthetic, moral, social and practical thinking. If right actions increase human happiness, wrong actions, Mill believed, are the powers that negate the higher qualities. Wrong actions tend to lead to human problems and difficulties whereas the higher qualities “increase our sum total of happiness” (Mill, 2007, p. 14).

No student deliberately sets out to answer anything wrongly nor deliberately tries to under achieve. What may be wrong with the student art work is conversely in proportion to the right action, yet what may be wrong with their art work is also an opportunity to improve their art work. Wrong thoughts can become sensible thoughts for getting things right by grasping what was wrong with the art performance. Wrong
thoughts in such instances serve a purpose for getting things right in the art work. It may well be because of the mistakes that the student has produced in their art work that, on reflection, makes them realise more appreciatively the idea, performance or the concept and the associated experiences of them, reaffirming, increasing and fostering more of their interest which previously the student had taken for granted. It is worth noting that singing in the wrong key, not putting enough colour contrast in the painting and being unable to properly do a pas de ciseaux are the type of challenges that may be good for the student, stiffening their resolve, reducing worry and anxiety when problems occur. Equally, an unobserved, sluggish, ill-adapted, scrappy, frantic, over-indulged, crude and uncontrolled few swipes of the paint brush, not knowing when to stop with chisel marks on the scultural piece the student is working on or adding a few further written lines of a poem may erase the correct expression one once had. Alternatively, a crudely played set of music notes, a dance movement performance, or a sketched scene in a play, for example, may be something that the student wants to retain because such incidents are beginning to indicate an alternative provocation of an idea that on reflection they are now imaginatively seeing the potential of its lively physical properties that once was anonymous to them. A mistake does not necessarily discredit a student’s thinking or make them incapacitated, but rather can galvanize them out of their stupor, giving their consciousness the kick where it is needed that rekindles their satisfaction and their appetite for art.

Good sense is shown by the student when they can recognise that they have a problem with executing the art task and furthermore when they: ‘can now see the error they have made’. The twist in the tail here is the inducement, the encouragement, the drawing upon past experiences and achievements, the willingness to revisit the problem, to learn from other students in the class, to do more work, and to recognise that problems are part-and-parcel aspects of learning; a problem recognised is an achievement in itself. When a student does not understand what the teacher of art has suggested to them, the teacher may have to resort to efforts that compare the student’s thinking with their own thinking. How the student and the teacher are picturing things differently about the art concept or using their hands or their body language in such a way that each is expressing a different musical or acting capacity. The teacher of art has to respect differences of the student’s attributed values about an art exercise and at the same time be aware that cultural differences are maybe causing the problem to exist (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 83). Progress rather than perfection matters most in learning. Consequently, tackling an art task that requires production in it related to its problem, is good in itself, a reflection of the true character of a student’s higher qualities in action. Mistakes, errors and problems with this or that in the art work can encourage self-belief, the ability to postulate further what needs to change in the art production. Mistakes bring out reasons and actions we simply have not meditated upon previously. Problems often relate to the particular circumstances and situations the student finds themselves in. What is wrong with the performance may be easily remedied when, for example, a teacher says ‘play it like this’. But
knowing we are performing the music wrongly may also take some time to remedy. It may require a great deal of practice to ‘play it like this’ and in playing it ‘like this’ what must the student grasp in order to play it ‘like this’? The student’s uncertainty about what to do to correct their problem is a teaching issue. Students may be aware of their mistakes but solving the problems they are experiencing may take some time to resolve. It may need to be broken up into chunks and stages in order to make their problems more manageable in ways that doing ‘this’ and doing ‘that’ show progress. A wrong action may occur because a student did not stop to reflect on their problem or the fact that they knew they had a problem but decided to ignore it rather than address it. This might result in another wrong action being taken or a repeat of the same problem, only this time it could be an even bigger problem than before. A wrong action might be the result of misreading what was required or because we were impatient, unfocused and disinterested. There are clearly many reasons why wrong actions result in problems and frustrations.

Mill thought that what makes an action right is how it sustains and extends our human sympathies, aesthetic experiences, intellectual, practical and moral existence. Right actions are able to bring forward not just one’s own self-interest but many other reasons that have a real relation and bearing upon one’s self-interest. Separating one’s own self-interest as a world completely indifferent to other persons self-interest in order to maximize one’s own happiness can become irresistible. But it was more natural, Mill thought, that human beings would want to share their happiness befitting of what a human life is. We are social creatures even when we are selfish (though we may deny it) because we want to be noticed, we want to feel self-important. We live in a social world where cooperation and friendship is the conventional norm. All teachers know how important cooperation and friendship is for student well-being. A further point about right actions is to some extent their habit forming importance. However, mistakes in a performance, a drawing, a garment or in writing a poem, for example, are what can prevent our human sympathies for the performance, drawing, garment or the written poem. If a student performs, draws, makes an object or writes a poem without expressing the higher qualities of the art, what is produced in this way more broadly reflects their own character, intellect and morality of life seen as indifferent to the common good, or perhaps poor teaching has provided insufficient guidance in these matters.

Thinking purely of oneself, Mill rejected for social and moral reasons because self-interest cannot represent proof of our understanding of happiness. Self-interest fails to take account of the majority of people’s views concerning happiness in life. Why other people’s views about happiness matter in the world and correspondingly should be part of the totality of one’s own views about happiness that contributes to one’s happiness, is Mill’s ideal notion of human happiness overall. Social, democratic agreement, he maintained, was the best way to maximise happiness overall in life for everyone. Blackburn remarks that “utilitarianism started with the ambition of breaking down the separateness that gives a person no concern for us apart from me” (Blackburn, 2001, p. 93). It is not difficult to recognise that moral, social, intellectual
and aesthetic beneficial experiences are the acts that can maximise happiness in human social welfare overall ways. Mill saw right actions were good for society if they strengthened our deeds and their consequences that focused on the advantages of welfare maximisation overall for the public common good in society of the ‘great happiness principle’.

We cannot presuppose what quality judgment a teacher is going to make about a student’s art work without them seeing the actual student’s art work first. We also know that during the creation of the art and the accompanying developmental process of it, there are going to be learner-like aspects about the quality of the art that are proper to the conception of ‘this’ art practice, educating the student about how to achieve the higher standard of an art conspiringly transforming the art activity through a human context. The student is instructed by the teacher of art in situational, circumstantial and developmental ways to consider, reconcile and respond appropriately to what their physical movements on stage or thoughts, actions and feelings are reciprocally arousing, counteracting, contradicting, confirming and confronting in order to bring home the sense of the art that is required at any one moment shaping and forming the art the student is producing.

In all art teaching areas (discipline based or not) common and ordinary life teaching remarks to students in an art class might include in important, sophisticated, sometimes difficult and in simply put ways: the orange-yellowness of the painting, the charcoal drawing of your dandelion flower is light and airy, the contrast of a black bird with green pines and blue sky in the print, a saucer of milk for the cat in a poem, a boat at sea in a storm, tears shed for a departing friend in a story, darkness turning plants pale, a fine elastic thread for a garment, hay bales in the field, the sound of drifting sand in the wind, the waving undulating sound of tall grass, a river shining like silver and a game of chess. A student remarks to their teacher that ‘this morning riding my bicycle to school I could feel the cold morning air on my face, I clicked my gears, bent down, gripped harder my handlebars and sped down Harley street as fast as I could…’ and the teacher responds by suggesting why don’t you now write a short story about your bicycle journey. In a drama class the teacher remarks that they want the student to ‘act like you are a key about to open a door’. ‘Having completed a number of different observational mixed-media, experimental, idea based, and decorative sketch drawing exercises over the past two weeks from the nuts and foliage on the drawing class tables, I now want the class to convert these drawings of the large collection of different nuts on the table that is still before you, continuing to use these objects as a reference, as objects to return to and investigate at will but with a different purpose today in mind. In the assignment notes I have handed out at the beginning of this work you will see that for the final two-weeks of this assignment I now want you to move your drawings on, with the familiarity and confidence you have acquired relating to the several different observational drawing exercises, experimentation and ideas we have covered involving how you wanted to express these nut drawings, for example, in appearance that have been formed according to your thoughts as estimates that appear as: ancient objects, dark, solid,
strong, wild, golden, colourful, diminutive, playful, large, earthly, alive, wrinkled, edible, delicious, festive, rough and strange looking fruits. Your task now is to produce, over the next two weeks, an abstract repeated pattern design that has a clear relationship to your nut drawings but with a developed abstract repeated pattern design of them. Using the A2 watercolour paper provided I want you to fill up this whole sheet using any single or mixed media painterly materials'. So what has been the point of these exercises in proportion to the welfare maximization overall concerns? In all of the above mentioned exercises are the experiences and effects of events, incidents and situations related to everyday life and their enjoyments and satisfactions with conceptions and ideas exploring and distinguishing quality of life experiences, of difficult and complex judgments, where the different art activities here are seeking to actualize and advance the students’ cognitions, perceptions and imagination in a social communicative manner.

When experiences, thoughts and perceptions are advancing the students’ art production, certain aspects and features are produced in a concrete material way that enable further imaginative feeling responses to advance and actualise more substantially the appearance-performance that is proper to the art task. These aspects unite, strengthen, and bring out the increased embodied appearance of the image and performance that more vividly and in conformity expresses the singular, individual and particular higher quality of the art on display. This is how art education in the teaching of art in relation to any practice of art generally tender to the learner-like forces, concerns and conditions of an art that affects how the art student in relation to their capacities, creates excellence in the art in an appearance of perceived-cognitive-feeling communication. The students’ capabilities at the level one is teaching art, are judged against the art task intentions-objectives-outcomes that subsequently affirms how excellence in teaching art will correspondingly assess the students’ art work.

When we think of the quality that an art possesses, we invariably consider how traditional practices of art and the movements and genera of an art and the institutionalisation of art past and present have created particular standards, classes, notions, types, degrees and grades that have determined the excellences of different art activities. Within particular works of student art, we consider the quality of the art related to a teacher assessment estimate. This could involve the manner, skill, method, imagination, character, insight, rhythm, subject-matter and idea representative of some of the commonest and cherished feelings as performed, read, made and seen by the student. In doing so, we would be thinking particularly of the art qualities that have engaged the students’ perceptions and cognition, noting how perhaps the tonal quality in the painting gives the student work an antique feel to the painting, a stiffness that suits the subject-matter in an unusual way, conjuring up, through properties of the art, an image of Roman inspired representation without the painting ever being so and without the student knowing this necessarily. The teacher of art makes a connection that the student is not aware of and need not have to be aware of. They may remark that ‘I really did like the way you played this musical piece, it was excellent’, or ‘I don’t think this colour is right’, to then go on to explain
why in both circumstances these judgements have been made. By using examples: ‘play this’, ‘sing this like this’, ‘see this’, ‘write it with this kind of sentiment’, ‘think of this’, an indication of how something should be done, realised or considered is being suggested that may need further illumination if the student does not recognise how to ‘sing like this’.

An art lesson in a high school exploring further different qualities of an art might for instance use a visual display on a wall or a lecture with visual images to examine the differences and similarities in: squares, cubes, triangles, oblongs, ellipses in two-dimensional and three-dimensional orthographic ways, a Maori woodcarving, a farm house in Chad, the decoration of a Kassena house in Songo (Upper Volta), the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, a wooden bowl by David Pye, a blacksmith’s tongs, a screen by Sakai Hōitsu, Seagram’s skyscraper building by Mies van der Rohe in New York, Zaha Hadid’s Hong Kong Innovation Tower, and Frank Gehry’s EMP Seattle museum, for example.

In an art class, the art teacher decides to discuss having pre-planned it, why sketch productions relating to scenes, drawings, physical movements, models and samples, for example, have a quality to them that is equal or unequal to, or better than that of a finished piece of art work. The art teacher is introducing this concept because the students’ understanding of the sophisticated process of art often begins at times with a sketch. As a notebook-sketchbook with a sequence of drawings in it, around a theme or an idea that is being investigated, the notebook-sketchbook also includes free-flowing unplanned drawings and notes. The notebook entries represent an understanding of the student creative thinking documenting their idea developments through the notebook-sketches which do not always follow a pattern. Serial and sequential images can be interrupted by changes in direction in the notebook-sketchbook. By drawing attention to sketches rather than the finished art work, a different activity is invoked. Drawings can be much looser, dynamic, fact finding, wide-ranging and inventive. The drawings can appear as though they are bouncing off one another in the notebook-sketchbook, constructing and deconstructing in explorative, creative, experimental, problem solving ways. Through various kinds of corrections, a clearer and more decisive picture of things tends to emerge.

In a student notebook-sketchbook, the art teacher sees scattered through it spontaneously captured figures and objects, incidents of daily life and responses to the environment or ideas that appear to have been immediately and reflectively produced. Many preparatory studies by the student have been made and the process itself is an inquiry attempting to document what appears as the student is thinking it, seeing it and altering the drawings in unexpected and magical ways. Evolving ideas are shown and changes are made to them: a leaf, a twig bent, a white flower, a hollow of a tree, a basket, a character’s manner, a textile drawing finding its way, an object just beginning to be realised with further separate drawing, cataloguing details and much reworking shown with a variety of mixed-media applied. Each sketch might possess a reverence for the past or the present, a wild, swelling, controlled, chirpy, tumbling, faint, curling, pear-shaped, frosty and entertaining in their recognition of
that which is an expression of an art’s higher quality, the cultivation of enjoyment. What catches the teacher’s eye is a leaf, a set of twig drawings, some plants, trees and rock drawings and in this instance they show and discuss with the students some of the drawings and sketches of Leonardo Da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, Henri Matisse, Henry Moore, Robert Motherwell, Georgia O’Keeffe, Helen Frankenthaler, Freda Hansen, Otto Wagner, Otto Eckmann, Van Gogh, John Piper, Paul Cézanne and Monet. In this learner-like process, the emphasis is not on polished, finished work but on what the notebook-sketch qualities reveal. To the whole class the art teacher reads out and hands out a quote by André Malraux with three attached drawings to their handout: one from Rubens, Velázquez and Delacroix and in their usual manner starts a discussion with the students.

“The sketch which the greatest painters had marked out for preservation—Rubens, for instance, and Velázquez (in the case of his Gardens)—do not strike us as unfinished pictures, but as self-sufficient expressions which would lose much of their vigor, perhaps all, were they constrained to be representational. Though Delacroix declared the finished picture superior to the sketch, it was no accident that he preserved so many of his sketches; indeed their quality as works of art is equal to that of his best pictures” (Malraux, 1978, p. 110).

For a drama teacher to tell a student that they performed exceptionally well on stage in their role as Hamlet in Shakespeare’s namesake play, is a judgement of quality implying that the student actor understood how the teacher wanted them to perform this role. When mentioning that a student’s performance was good, we are recognising why it was relevant, triumphant, splendid and enjoyable. To enrich, enhance and refine a sketch that currently has a loose end to the music by adding more colour, more toughness to it, a crackling set of musical notes, a different metaphor that needs to be imagined or a soft touch winding down, are steps that might have to be thought about. To continue to rework a set of drawings, models, photographs, pages of a story and to reconstruct, refashion and rethink what the quality of an object or fashion garment should be is the path that the art activity in education takes by pedagogically refining the modes of intelligence that are right for the student’s particular and singular art production, by being carefully conscious of the higher common pleasures of art.