

Abstract

Soul and Care as Visual Arts Practice?

This paper raises the question if art education holds the potential to teach beyond making and creating, i.e. paintings, sculptures et cetera. Many respected education theorists continue to bring up the idea of teaching students to care. This paper will look closer at care theory, the tools it needs and if it can support artist teachers. In another view, how can artist teachers support creating communities of caring people who value relationships? *Where do aesthetics, independent thought and reflectivity fit in?* The paper will also seek to make connections between theory and practice by reflecting on the author's current working environment and her use of Choice Based Art.

University of the West of Scotland
Master of Education Artist Teacher
Christine Anne Berger

January 10, 2014

Total words: 3164
(Excluding abstract, table of content and references)

Table of content

Soul and Care as Visual Arts Practice

1. Introduction

2. Literature review
 - 2.1. Soul and Storytelling
 - 2.2. Aesthetics: A Tool for Judgment
 - 2.3. Caring as Visual Arts Practice
 - 2.4. Tools for Teaching Care
 - 2.4.1. Modeling
 - 2.4.2. Dialogue
 - 2.4.3. Practice
 - 2.4.4. Confirmation

3. Discussion on Arts Based Research for the Soul
 - 3.1. Choice Based Arts Practice
 - 3.2. Choice Based Arts Practice as Learning to Care
 - 3.3. Similar Views: Room 13

4. Conclusion and Reflection

5. References

1. Introduction

Plotinus believed that the power to judge beauty and ugliness, i.e. aesthetics, was in the soul and that it uses what it knows of objects and forms to compare and judge (Plotinus ca. 205-270 BC). Aesthetics as defined in the 18th century by The Earl of Shaftesbury, considered “the founder of modern aesthetics” did not make “a clear distinction between artistic [aesthetics] and moral [ethics] beauty” (Kristeller, 1978, pg. 11). Hume separated “ethics and aesthetics” (Kristeller, 1978, pg. 11); a notion finding support in Kant’s statement: “... to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature... is always a mark of a good soul” (Kant, 1978, pg. 147).

Care theorist Noddings connects education and ethics in her notion on taking a “Humean position” (Noddings, 2002, pg. 8) and offers “a caring alternative to character education” (pg.1). She argues the presence of a “moral” rather than “educational failure” (pg. 94) and continues, “the educational task...is to educate the passions, especially the moral sentiments” (pg. 8). In contrast to character education (pg. 123), with its focus on virtues, care theorists “turn from ethics of virtue to relational ethics” (pg.44). Care theorists furthermore argue that care can be learned through modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation (Noddings, 2002).

In the context of the above the author of this paper raises the question if art education holds the potential to teach beyond making and creating, i.e. paintings, sculptures et cetera, using *aesthetics* to teach *independent thought* and *reflectivity* – henceforth referred to as *soul* and *care*? This paper ventures to find answers to the question brought forward. It will start with a review of bodies of work on literature describing the role storytelling, soul and aesthetics play in art educational contexts, what *care theory* is suggested to be and the tools that appear to support teaching a curriculum of care. Next, she will engage in a discussion seeking to create a deeper understanding about the potential value deriving from implementing a curriculum of *care*. The discussion will make use of observations made in her current working environment. Conclusions, including critical reflections will bring the paper to its end.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Soul and Storytelling

Kristeller argues when Plato (in Symposium and the Phaedrus) spoke of beauty it was “not merely of the physical beauty of human persons, but also of beautiful habits of the soul and of the beautiful cognition” (1978, pg. 4). Noddings argues “Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates all seemed to agree that children need good models of moral behavior” and “the arts can be a powerful influence on moral development” (2002, pg. 40) and continues “Hume suggested that stories and the arts help in cultivating the moral sentiments” (Noddings, 2002, pg. 41).

“Art is not just for oneself, not just a marker of one’s own understanding. It is also a map for those who follow after us. The craft of questions, the craft of stories, the craft of the hands—all these are the making of something, and that something is soul.”

Dr. Clarisa Pinkola Estés, 1992, pg.15

Greene argues the importance of helping youth “experience art as a way of understanding” and further suggests that this action “is at the core of aesthetic education” (1995, pg. 149). Eisner argues arts based research is like storytelling, “creating opportunities to engage in heightened states of awareness” and “researchers are storytellers, we are metaphor makers” (Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund, 2008, pg. 239). Eisner further suggests, “art education programs should make special efforts to enable students to secure aesthetic forms of experience in everyday life” and this provides one with a “unique and telling view” (2002, pp. 44-45). Noddings argues, “Stories have enormous power” and have not only been used to indoctrinate “moral conformity and obedience” but also as a research technique in exercising “moral imagination” (Noddings, 2002, pg. 45).

2.2. Aesthetics: A Tool for Judgment

Siegesmund argues Baumgarten “coined the term aesthetics” in 1735 based on “Greek words related to sensory perception” (2010, pg. 82). Siegesmund continues that Baumgarten did not want to define “beauty or art” but was interested in “coming

to know through dynamic relational aesthetics” and that there exists “three main competing theories of aesthetics:” Baumgarten`s, Kant`s and Hegel`s (pg. 83).

Furthermore, Dickie argues the difficulty in separating aesthetic attitude from moral attitude and suggests that it “is needed to discuss the relation of morality and aesthetic value” (Dickie, 1964, pg. 460). Schiller argued “that man must pass through the aesthetic condition, from the merely physical, in order to reach the rational or moral (Schiller and Snell, 2004, pg.12).

2.3. Caring as Visual Arts Practice

Nodding argues “critical thinking, requires a starting point in moral sensibility, and the arts can contribute significantly to the development of such sensibility” (Noddings, 2002, pg. 40). She also argues that teachers should provide caring environments, behave as caring adults and enable students to learn to be cared for (2002). This process seemingly “provides many opportunities for them to practice caring” and “engage regularly in dialogue” (pg. 41). Siegesmund argues, in support of Schiller “you cannot tell them to care...individuals must make their own first move toward consciousness” (2010, pg. 84). He continues the argument (via Schiller) that education could teach for creating “functional communities through intra and interpersonal relationship” and that this “was the project of aesthetics” (pg. 84). Siegesmund further argues that the goal of Enlightenment (via Schiller) entails teaching students “to think” and practice “individual responsibility” (pg.84). Sousanis argues teaching students in art class to be responsible and creative could create caring individuals because “creativity is an act of care” (2013, pg. 10). He further argues that to care for something means to take responsibility for it: to own it (2013).

2.4. Tools for Teaching Care

The following tools: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation are the four “components of moral education” recommended by Nell Noddings for implementing a curriculum of care (Noddings, 2002, pg.15). Noddings argues for this “caring alternative to character education” in her book *Educating Moral People* (2002).

2.4.1. Modeling

Sullivan argues modeling is the most process-oriented “means of visualizing data” amongst “mapping, indexing, and modeling” (Sullivan, 2010, pg.199). He argues that modelling is used to seek out, “information about the relationships among features within a structure” (pg.199). Sullivan argues that Efland and Elkins use this process to study and propose new models of practice in arts education (pg. 200). In care theory, Noddings (2002) uses the term “modeling” to discuss how the teacher becomes the model. She argues this model teacher provides the student and opportunity to visualize and experience caring (2002). Noddings argues “reflection is essential...not only on our competence as carers but also on our role as models” (Noddings, 2002, 16).

2.4.2. Dialogue

Noddings argues that dialogue “is central to moral education” (Noddings, 2002, pg.7). She argues there must be “regular conversation” with children “to affect their moral development” in order to “encourage their reflection on the great existential questions” (pg. 91). Noddings also argues storytelling could be used in all subjects (not only art), i.e. math and sciences, as “starting points” for “conversations” that “have the potential to contribute significantly to moral life and education (Noddings, 2002, pg. 146).

Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, in support of Barone, argue how arts-based research could “widen a circle of conversation and” by asking “better questions” could “evoke conspiratorial conversations” (2008, pg. 236). They claim that “communities form through such conversations” and that this leads to the emergence of “social action” (pg. 236).

2.4.3. Practice

Siegesmund (2010) argues that research is a product of inquiry and that inquiry requires the ability to formulate questions that may lead to new understandings and communities (Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor further argues (on behalf of Dewey) arts based research has “the intellectual promise” of providing opportunities to research and give “attention to the relationships of qualities” (2008, pg. 234). They argue that the value of learning as an artist is that “the arts-based researcher can both create and critique, challenge and explain” (Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, pg. 234).

Greene (1995), Noddings (2002), Sousanis (2013) and Siegesmund (2010) argue that reflective behaviour supports creating citizens who *care*. Burnard argues that artistic reflective processes are essential to building “tacit knowledge” which include the learning of reflective “strategies and theories that support a choice, decision or judgment” (2006 pg. 10). Burnard further argues that there are many modes of reflection and that artists often spend much of their time reflecting, “placing reflection at the heart of the creative process” (2006, pg.3). Sousanis argues that “creation creates ownership and ownership engenders care” (2013, pg. 1).

2.4.4. Confirmation

Care theorists argue that confirmation can only take place when two have a relation (Noddings, 2002). We confirm by showing the other that we can “identify a motive and use it in confirmation” and the cared for should recognize it as his or her own” (pg. 21). Noddings further argues care theorists confirmation differs from religious education in that the dialogue is intended to strengthen the relationship of carer and cared for (Noddings, 2002).

3. Discussion on Arts Based Research for the Soul

If societies used art (i.e. music, drama, stories) in the past to discuss how soul judges beauty (Kristeller, 1978) can we, through a curriculum of caring, deepen souls in today's art class? What would be the value of doing so? Discussions, observed by the author, in art class are often about aesthetic choices made by the artist and emotional reflections in connection to those choices. In these discussions the students appear to be researching or seeking connections for deeper understanding. Such discussions produce no wrong answers, often non-conclusive, as they are discussion of discovery more than anything else. Can such open-ended discussions reduce the fear of participation in dialogue and encourage curiosity? "Dialogue", Noddings argues, "is the most fundamental component of the care model", citing Paulo Freire (1970): "[discussions are] open-ended" (2002, pg. 16).

How can one move from dialogue to the behaviour of caring? Noddings (2002) argues that we have enough prescriptive virtues and principals, what seems to be lacking is implementation. Can arts based research provide the learner, a unique chance to participate in caring relationships and learn to care? Siegesmund and Cahnmann-Taylor argue that "participatory research [allows that one can] apply the insights of arts-based inquiry to their own lives" (2008, pg. 235), and in doing so create their own knowledge of caring to pass on.

3.1. Choice Based Arts Practice as Builder of Soul and Aesthetic

It would seem teaching care also means teaching to think more holistic and inclusive, i.e. to seek relationships, search for deeper understanding, reflect aesthetically, and make independent well-informed choices. Can arts teaching practice encompass all of these attributes? In a Swiss art centre, managed by the author, "Choice Based Art" (Douglas and Jaquith, 2009, pg. 3) is practiced. This arts practice implemented by the author's arts centre teaches for what is called "Artistic Behaviour" (Douglas and Jaquith, 2009, pg. 29). Her students' ages range from five to eighteen years old. The method of her teaching for Artistic Behaviour seeks that students can create their own art and message. Students choose the medium they wish to express themselves in. They may choose to work at a number of different stations to accomplish their art;

i.e. sculpture, painting, collage, sewing, drawing, photography, graphic design, art library and fibre arts. The stations are cared for and maintained for the students by the students. The students are asked to work in a cycle of conception, making and reflection. They may work alone or in groups.

After learning to care for the art stations and standard safety rules the student's initial task is to conceptualize a project with a message. The author observes regularly that new students find this task difficult. New students often express that they do not know what to make. They wish the teacher to give an idea. It has been observed that new students need six to twelve months to develop sufficient confidence to create independently. Following the confidence building, students begin to openly discuss their own personal aesthetic judgements and reflections. After such a period they adapt new artistic behaviour. Consequently it becomes more difficult to ask the students to work on a specific project (designed by someone else). They seem to have tasted the value of independent thought. Thus it appears once students adopt artistic behaviour they become reluctant to give it away.

3.2. Choice Based Arts Practice as Learning to *Care*

As mentioned above the stations in Choice Based Art are cared for and maintained by the students. The author has observed that new students sometimes show difficulty and or unwillingness to care for material, time and other people. These particular students seem to also have difficulty with communication. Some students have expressed that they have never washed their own paintbrush before. They seem not to understand why they have to.

Sousanis quotes Ford when he said that workers "want to be led...they want to have everything done for them and have no responsibility", however Sousanis argues that this loss of responsibility or "ownership of our lives leads to a lack of care (2013, pg. 4). He further argues, "in the name of convenience, we forego care and creativity" (pg. 4). From the author's experience, Choice Based Arts practice is capable of teaching students tools of caring, i.e. dialogue and reflection. Further it has been experienced by the author, that these tools often lead to the ability to make independent informed choices, creating or restoring relations between persons and or objects. Yet, it appears to be extremely demanding for teachers must be flexible

and skilled at many forms of art making, problem solving, research, motivation and communication. Noddings argues artist teachers have an advantage because they have “control of the artistic medium” (Noddings, 2002, pg. 145) allowing flexibility in the course of conversation, or a change of lesson plans when teaching. Could Choice Based Arts practice help create soulful caring individuals and communities?

3.3. Similar Views: Room 13

“The creativity and critical thinking skills demanded in the studio environment foster a confidence that will enable them (students) to lead the way in exploring new applications of these tools that will be necessary as they grow up to find their place in the workspaces of the future.”

Claire Gibb, *Room 13*, 2012, pg. 243

It could be said that Art is made for others to experience, unless it is purely therapeutic but even then Dr. Estés believes it is made as a map for others to follow (Estés, 1992, pg.15). Room 13 could be seen as a similar arts practice to Choice Based Arts practice. Their main point however seems to challenge how old one has to be to make art? The children use what has been widely accepted as traditional art making practices giving their work validity. Art is considered a social, communicative process by Carroll and “from an anthropological point of view, the prospect of utterly asocial art has the probability of zero” (2008, pg. 453). Could it be that communication and dialogue skills are so important in the artist place that the art room, through discussing aesthetics, is the perfect environment for learning to care?

4. Conclusion and Reflection

Soul, in past societies, seems to have referred to judging moral beauty. Some care theorists argue that judgement is based on one's personal aesthetics, i.e. what one considers beautiful (Noddings, 2002, Siegesmund, 2010, Sousanis; 2013). Does one have to care about something before one may place judgement on it? It would seem that to make judgements one would seek to be informed. It appears sensible to suggest that to be informed one is in need to research, i.e. collect information? Do information providers create indoctrination or independent thought? Could the determining factor of judgement be found in the discussion that takes place with the information? Considering the said the author suggests that dialogue creates deeper understanding and the more understanding one has the deeper the drive is to care. There appears to be societal value in teaching for deeper understanding: questioning, caring, aesthetics. Could Choice Based Arts practice and teaching for artistic behaviour provide students the toolbox they need to create value in our future society through independent thought, informed judgments, and the ability to *Care with Soul*?

“The outcome of such learning is personal agency: autonomous individuals who have the capacity to imaginatively shape their own lives by having the courage to write their own stories.”

Cahnmann-Taylor, M. and Siegesmund, R. 2008, pg. 244

In order to have constructive dialogue in Choice Based Arts the author has often observed it first necessary to teach communication tools. Dialogue could be a main ingredient to breaking the barriers between theory and practice. “The Art of Focused Conversation [*Objective, Reflective, Interpretive and Decisional*]” questioning]” is a conversation method that leads “people through certain phases of reflection, enabling them to process their experience as a group” (Stanfield, 2000, pg. 17). The author has also observed that once constructive dialogue has been learned and applied in the classroom a more valuable research environment exists. A critical concern of the author however is that during institutional change from a previous art practice to Choice Based Arts practice there is an extreme need for careful dialogue with parents, administration and students. The change must be well managed or the outcome could devalue what Choice Based Arts strives for hence the suggestion for

developing strong negotiation skills. Pringle (2009) and Hall (2010) both also suggest the need of the artist teacher to develop stronger negotiation skills to better “reappraise their art practice and...use that practice to inform their teaching” (Hall, 2010, pg. 109).

Burnard suggested that we behave as “champions among colleagues, to operationalise our own capacity for self-reflection and to nurture reflective cultures” (2006, pg. 11). She further suggests that we “need to organize ourselves” as art educators, cease competing and form an alliance “in order to implement changes of real significance to arts curricular” (pg. 11). It would also seem sensible to suggest that caring dialogue groups amongst artist teachers may create more possibilities to implement Burnards suggestions and help bridge theory and practice.

The perspective of caring suggests that one focuses also on the recipient of caring. Can the recipient accept care? Do they trust it? In bridging *Care Theory* and *Choice Based Arts* practice the author intends to create a trust based environment that focuses on the cared for. The perspective shift could offer an opportunity for students (and teacher) to become more aware of how attitudes, behaviour and art may affect others (people and objects). The author will seek to engage students in more open dialogue (focused conversation), discuss reflections (using mirror questions for confirmation) and use stories (art history) as a starting point. In this context the author will also attempt to teach art students of motive drivers and personality differences in hope of creating deeper understanding (souls) and tolerance between the cared for and the carer.

5. References

- Burnard, P (2006) Rethinking the Imperatives for Reflective Practices in Arts Education, in *Reflective Practices in Arts Education Series: Landscapes: the Arts, Aesthetics, and Education*, Vol. 5 Burnard, Pamela; Hennessy, Sarah (Eds.) Dordrecht: Springer.
- Dickie, G., "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1/1 (1964): 56-65. Copyright 1964 by American Philosophical Quarterly. Reprinted by permission of the journal. In: Cahn, S. and Meskin, A. eds. 2013. *Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 455- 465.
- Cahnmann-Taylor, M. and Siegesmund, R. 2008. *Arts-based research in education*. New York: Routledge.
- Douglas, K. and Jaquith, D. 2009. *Engaging learners through artmaking*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Eisner, E. 2002. *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Estés, C. 1992. *Women who run with the wolves*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Gibb, C. 2012. Room 13: The Movement and International Network. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 31 (3), pp. 237–244.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hall, J. Jade 29.2. (2010) Making Art, Teaching Art, Learning Art: Exploring the Concept of the Artist Teacher. (2010). NSEAD/Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Kant, I. 1784. Critique of Judgement. In: Cahn, S. and Meskin, A. eds. 2013. *Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 131-169.
- Kristeller, P. 1978. Introduction. In: Cahn, S. and Meskin, A. eds. 2013. *Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 1-15.
- Carroll, N. 1999. Identifying Art. In: Cahn, S. and Aaron, M. eds. 2008. *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 445-454.
- Noddings, N. 2002. *Educating moral people*. New York, NY [u.a.]: Teachers College Press.
- Plotinus. n.d. Ennead I, vi. in *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Reading*, trans. John Dillion and Lyod P. Gerson (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 2004), pp.18-30. Copyright 2004 by Hackett Publishing, Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 455- 465 In: Cahn, S. and Meskin, A. eds. 2013. *Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 131-169.

Pringle, E., JADE 28.2 (2009) The Artist-Led Pedagogic Process in the Contemporary Art Gallery: Developing a Meaning Making Framework. (2009). NSEAD/Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Schiller, F. and Snell, R. 2004. *On the aesthetic education of man*. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications.

Siegesmund, R. 2010. Aesthetic as a Curriculum of Care and Responsible Choice. In: Costantino, T. and White, B. eds. 2010. *Essays on aesthetic education for the 21st century*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 81-92.

Siegesmund, R. and Cahnmann-Taylor, M. 2008. The tensions of arts-based research in education reconsidered, The promise for practice. In: Siegesmund, R. and Cahnmann-Taylor, M. eds. 2008. *Arts-based research in education*. New York: Routledge., pp. 231-246.

Sousanis, N. 2013. Creativity Reconsidered: Incorporating Care. *Interactive Discourse – The International Online Journal of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 3: SPECIAL ISSUE on Creativity and Emotional Wellbeing (July 2011), Available from: doi: ISSN 1756-3445, Edited by Diarmuid McAuliffe & Lisa McAuliffe [Accessed: 26 Nov 2013].

Stanfield, B. (2000) *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 ways to access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*. Gabriola Island, BC Canada: New Society Publishers .

Sullivan, G. (2010) *Art Practice as Research in Art Practice as Research: inquiry in the visual arts (2nd Ed)*, London: Sage