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AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

by

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## AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

## INTRODUCTION

In the preface to the book Education and Art, published by Unesco, it is said that "education has...to be a mode of initiation so that each person may be as well-equipped as possible for living in his own life and for contributing to the good life of others and of the community".

"It is in this respect," the preface continues, "that education by means of the arts is so valuable because it fosters the whole development of the personality, uniting intellectual activity with physical skills, but fusing them in a creative process that is in itself among the most precious attributes of man".

This, in condensed form, expresses the changes which have taken place in the underlying conception, aims and methods of aesthetic education.

These changes are all the more remarkable because as we read in another preface (to one of the working papers of the XVIIIth International Conference on Public Education, held in Geneva in 1955, entitled Teaching of art in primary and secondary schools), "the obvious benefits of technological advance are showing themselves to be possessed also of a powerful evil. Through an education in which art has its due place, individuals can gain the strength to overcome the threatened loss of their humanity".

The two prefaces I have just quoted come out in favour of an education which aims to mould a new man not passively adapted to an unchanging world but with a clearer perception of the world, able to adapt to its changes and daring to initiate suitable changes.

The aim in one case is, by heightening perception, observation and feeling, to ward off the danger that technical innovations will distort the personality, and in the other to enrich the personality by the development of creativity which will result from art education.

It follows that art education should be given something more than subordinate status by integrating it with all the branches of culture and vocational training, on an equal footing with literature or science.

In 1955, the XVIIIth International Conference on Public Education, already mentioned, was attended by the representatives of nearly 65 countries. This figure has almost doubled today through the advent of new States freed from the yoke of colonialism, and among their most urgent tasks is that of recovering national identity, of searching earnestly for nationhood.

This always implies a certain emphasis on the cultural past. These countries are thus confronted by the problem of whether they should go in for the meek, fruitless imitation of past achievements, or whether, on the contrary, they should try to go beyond the past in a creative, vital way, subjecting it to a deep and critical appraisal which will throw light on the meaning to be given to a country's historical heritage if it is to serve as a foundation for a well-defined cultural policy.

The topic which we are considering calls, rightly in my opinion, for an acknowledgement that art education has a pre-eminent rôle to play in promoting cultural values in the national context. Following this line of approach, I propose to examine the importance and the limits of the rich and varied cultural heritage handed down to us in black Africa from previous generations.

The modulations of speech, the rhythms of dances and the shapes of sculptures and masks have considerably enriched the cultural heritage of all mankind. The aim of art education, when it serves the recovery of identity and the development of nationhood, must be to consider this cultural heritage in the light of history and through the mirror of actual conditions in order to introduce all to artistic creation and the appreciation of works of art.

A. I am assuming that the representatives of the various branches of art to whom I address these remarks, have come here as educational workers, so I begin my paper by defining the meaning of the words "aesthetic education", an expression which is, indeed, somewhat ambiguous.

1. When we use the word "education", we must agree on what we mean (at least as when we are speaking French). The words "education" and "to educate" evoke, to begin with, teaching. Is not the task that of nurturing, training and raising from childhood to adulthood? Education stresses the practical aspect of any teaching whilst the theoretical aspects are the concern of instruction. The latter increases the quantity of information which constitutes an individual's knowledge whilst education sharpens his powers of communicating with others and the world in space and in time. Thus, it appeals particularly to the intellect, transmitting knowledge independently of the historical or sociological framework in which teacher and taught find themselves. Whilst it develops the critical faculties, instruction tends to "cram the brain".

On the other hand, although it is based on a principle of authority, education takes into account the social and historical frameworks in which it is given and thus concerns itself with beliefs in order to sharpen the awareness of values. I feel this to be all the more true because in the African languages which I know, the man who has received instruction is said to be "well read" i.e. "utoma tanga" (Kikongo); "a tanga mingi" (Lingala);; "o djangui nofevi" (Toucouleur), whilst in Kikongo, for example, to educate is "longa", which means "to give advice", with all that that implies of experience of life, wisdom, knowledge and morality.

By instruction one convinces and by education one persuades. The two aspects, instruction and education, can of course be separated from each other in varying degrees, but it is surely a significant fact that most Ministries of "Instruction Publique", as they were called in the first half of the century, have been promoted to the rank of Ministry of "Education".

In a word, instruction underlies the eclecticism of "research workers" whilst education, at least as we have described it, is the attribute of the man of action.

2. Although this throws some light on the word "education", it nevertheless still leaves the term we are examining somewhat in the dark. When, indeed, we look at the great variety and range of meanings attached to it we cannot fail to feel that the adjective here accompanying the noun is a stumbling block.

Most attempts at constructing a general theory of aesthetics are the work of philosophers. It is perhaps the fact that philosophers have, so to speak, held the monopoly of aesthetics which explains the difficulties these have been in raising to the level of a theory an activity to which they were almost all strangers.

In Kant, for example, we find studies of the a priori forms of sensibility whilst for Hegel, aesthetics are the representation of the "Absolute Spirit" "outside", with religion assuming the rôle of depicting it "within".

This shows, without my needing to stress the point any further, the varieties of meaning attached by different philosophers to the term. We should nevertheless note that philosophical works, or at least those which still enjoy some consideration in education in our countries, are, on the subject of aesthetics, variations on the idea of the Beautiful dear to Plato.

Although Aristotle described the Beautiful in terms of co-ordination, symmetry and precision, the Stoics made it equivalent to the Good, whilst the Alexandrians felt the Beautiful to be a way of attaining to the Absolute. According to Saint Thomas, it is "what is pleasing to the sight" (*id quod visum placet*), or in other words the object of intuition. "The idea of the Beautiful engenders what is called aesthetics" (Victor Cousin).

However ingenious these variations of philosophical idealism might be, one wants to know in the final analysis what aesthetics teaches which is peculiar to it alone. Whatever divergencies there may be in doctrine, intention or approach, everyone, whether philosopher or not, will agree that there is a nucleus of meaning: aesthetics is the study of the arts.

It will be said that I have taken the long way round to arrive at the statement of what, at first sight, seems self-evident. I nevertheless had to take this path since it is by looking at the limits of the semantic field of the words education and aesthetics that we can grasp the ultimate objective and the underlying conception from which aesthetic education must spring, not for art for its own sake but by means of art.

3. We sometimes have such vague ideas about the word "art" that we take this vagueness to be art itself. Whilst it takes a variety of forms according to its object, field and subject, art is the expression in symbolic forms of that force which makes man want to leave behind some trace of himself and his dreams.

These forms appear in the various guises given to art by different peoples and in the aspects which they owe to particular ethnic groups. They express how hopes, how fears, harmony with one's surroundings or the need to escape and separate oneself from them, and they reflect a conception of the universe and of what creates life or destroys it.

This means that the skill, imagination and sensibility of past generations have bequeathed us a functional art. The modulations of speech, the rhythms of dances and the shapes of sculptures and masks are intimately bound up with the social or spiritual functions for which they were produced.

We turn once more to semantics to illustrate our point: on the Batéké plateau, the word "ve" designates what is beautiful at the same time as what is morally good, practical, ingenious and healthy. Here the idea of the Beautiful is not isolated but it always is associated with "strength", similar to the Christian concept of grace. The result is that the idea of a work of art goes beyond what is most frequently thought of as a product of the imagination.

Although dances and proverbs, masks, and statues are images, they are, nevertheless, not just empty show but are active works, and depiction is not divorced from practical use, from the mysterious and the sacred.

The consequence is that one finds very few realistic depictions and hardly any portraits. All that is depicted of man is that which is considered to be essential in him. Statuary art does not therefore aim for a physical representation of the ancestor. It captures and fixes his spirit so that it is no longer wandering and at liberty to interfere among the living. Bodies are buried with objects belonging to the dead person and sometimes also with food. The objects

used to decorate tombs, as in Madagascar, are put there to tempt the dead person to stay and not try to escape.

As Heriberto Quadraño Cogollo, a young Colombian painter has said, African art is a "thermometer" art, an art close to the life of society, in which craft-work and artistic creation are inseparable. The properties of the work of art, the tool or the lucky charm are almost always found together in the same object and the same form.

4. Form is only a pretext. It is bewitched as well as bewitching, it amuses as well as protects, and instructs as well as cures. A jewel is worn first and foremost as a lucky charm and only secondarily as an ornament. The same is true of statues. I have in front of me a statuette which used to be part of a witch-doctor's stock-in-trade and which many of my friends, when told of its origin, shrink from touching as if it were some radio-active substance.

In some cases, as among the Bakongo or the Ifè of the Bight of Benin, statuary art transmits, extols or commemorates the forces of which the chief is the incarnation, repository and guardian. In other cases, as among the peoples of the Sudan, statues represent, in the sanctuaries, important objects which define social relationships between individuals, between groups and between the ethnic group and the rest of the world. Language also has similar characteristics, for example, a particular chant is used for exorcism, one formula conveys a curse whilst another is used in initiation. At the evening gatherings where "everybody is a story-teller", legends give lessons in bravery and tales, riddles and proverbs inculcate better behaviour. As Tchicaya Utam'si says (Légendes Africaines, Ed. Seghers), these gatherings are indeed the first school where, beneath the "council tree" great things are learnt. Art, speech and teaching all go together.

In brief, the forms go beyond even the religious element which is, nevertheless, of decisive importance. The work of art liberates potentialities for other games and other tasks, and religion, power and drama are the functional axes of African art.

5. The work of art expresses every level of this system, i.e. the social, technical, legal and religious organization, not only through the morphology of objects, including everyday utensils, and not only the words of invocations, stories and riddles, but also in individual or collective actions and in the gestures of rituals or games.

It is an art of content, of the real but invisible world, which reduces form to essentials so as to enhance its value as a symbol. "The symbols of bygone things instruct the children, say the Dogons. The symbols of bygone things are the path we follow. We draw them so that the children shall repeat (remake) the symbols of things (customs)". (M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, Le renard pâle, Institut d'Ethnologie, Paris, p. 80).

The corpus of symbols constitutes a record of the past, of the genesis of things, an index of past history and a means of acting on the future. The work of art deploys symbols which alone the commentary of the initiated can render intelligible.

B. Initiation is a means of communicating knowledge and teaching behaviour which makes it possible to counter the threats of the outside world and to ensure "that each person may be as well equipped as possible for living his own life and for contributing to the good life of others and of the community". This, surely, before the letter was the first aesthetic education.

1. Viewed in perspective, the African artistic tradition may be said to define the values at work in initiation, a veritable "paideia" of both child and adult by means of the artistic object. These are values of form and content and of expression, too, and are operative categories rightly called "a priori emotional" by analogy with those which are "a priori intellectual" and which work in the reason.

A community of feelings and aspirations unites the creator of the object with the one who contemplates it - an immediate intuitive enlargement of a reality which surpasses common knowledge, an exaltation and elevation of the subjective world and the extension of a kind of society of consciousness.

The creator of the object, for his part, is anonymous. He does not sign his work and does not own it. Art has no real existence or importance outside of the actual work of art.

The concept underlying initiation - I was going to say education - by means of art in Africa is that it is something which enriches the subjective universe of the individual and "socializes" the life of all.

The result is that this art is, in essence, eminently an art of the people, an art of instruction and edification. It is social art, total art par excellence which invests all possible forms of expression. It leaves a deep imprint on the way things are conceived intellectually, the way things are felt, and on the whole set of values which shape the behaviour of the individual, which is why it retains a powerful educative force.

2. The idea that there exists a "parity of choice" or a "structural affinity" between different aspects of a historic whole is not a new one. To say so, as I do here with respect to African art, is to invite, at best, the respectful and measured praise evoked either by abstract speculation or potent tautology, and this for two reasons: firstly, because the same analysis is perfectly applicable to other societies; secondly, and more important, if one examines in the light of what I am saying the present development of artistic expression and its place in the life of Africans today, one cannot but fail to be struck by a real contrast and a certain widespread confusion which is a sign of deep disarray.

In highly organized hierarchical societies such as ancient Greece, Europe in the Middle Ages or traditional Africa, religious beliefs cement the foundations of human communities and determine the spiritual and material lives of their members. All the socializing resources of art are tapped in these societies by religion, and in this way the creators of art put their talents at the service of the community of the faithful. The result is that art fulfils highly educational functions in social life, moulding the aesthetic sensibilities and providing moral, religious and intellectual training (Irena Wojnar, L'art comme instrument pedagogique intégral, Warsaw).

3. The Greek lived in a world which was literally impregnated with art and the dramas of Athens or Epidaurus freed his spirit through the tragic feelings of fear and pity which they inspired in him. His everyday life was lived to the accompaniment of everything which was magnificent and sublime. He took part in festivals where the songs and dances, the poetry and drama, the statues and temples from the Pantheon to the Acropolis, expressed the Kalos-Kagathos, the ideal of the good and handsome man, in a spirit of religious fervour and collective enthusiasm.

The man of the Middle Ages, too, was nurtured morally and intellectually by works of art. In the cathedrals, the statues around him and the decorations on the vaults recounted first and foremost the history of the gospels. Looking

at the Romanesque or Gothic facades, he absorbed from them, through the bibliae pauperum, his first encyclopaedic information. In any case, did not the builders of the cathedrals enshrine in stone the very principles of scholasticism, i.e. strict separation of the parts, an express and explicit clarity in the hierarchies of forms and the harmonious conciliation of contraries? The Summa Theologica and the cathedral may thus be seen as intelligible wholes composed according to identical methods (E. Panofski, Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique, Editions de Minuit).

There is no discontinuity between art, the everyday object and the tool. Craftsmanship, so dear to the trade-guilds, and artistic creation are inseparable.

The cathedral annexed to itself all the forms of expression: frescoes and statues, music and ritual, all helped to unite consciousness and sensibility. (The same could be said of the mosque, where the superabundance of arabesques was an attempt to express divine plenitude.) The artist, "one man among others" (J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages), was a man who did not feel as a fundamental need that innermost urge to express and to fulfil himself in a tangible object. In a word, despite the distance separating them geographically, these works of art express a certain conception of existence at a given period of time and allow a closer participation in the collective genius of human societies.

4. Greek art, as we have seen, presupposes Greek mythology, or in other words the nature and shape of society as already moulded by the popular imagination. These are its raw materials. "Mythology was not only the arsenal of Greek art but its maternal bosom". (Marx, Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie).

Greek mythology has disappeared, but Greek art still holds such an attraction today that in certain respects it is the norm and the model. As Marx again says, just as an adult "delights in the simplicity of the child and aspires to reproduce the child's truth" so one may explain the charm of an art produced by a social stage which "will never return".

European art, for its part, expressed the new adventure of the Renaissance. The repertoire of religious themes from the Middle Ages was still used but the new aim which the creator of art set himself radically transformed the nature of his work. The secularization of society, concern for this life taking precedence over the exclusive quest for salvation, economic development, the discovery of new resources and a legitimate desire to enjoy them, all created a world of grace and elegance, balance and harmony.

Increasingly, the function of the work of art was to decorate and to embellish life, and consequently the artist begins to emerge from the workman who leaves the service of God to enter the service of Man.

In the Middle Ages, the historical or the utilitarian stifled the other aspects of artistic creation. The Renaissance, on the other hand, set up the aesthetic function of the consideration of "beauty" in the object as the decisive element. The man of the Middle Ages, like Renaissance man, of course experienced the subjective feelings of pleasure and exaltation, but whereas in the Middle Ages it was the object which aroused the aesthetic emotion, at the time of the Renaissance it was primarily manner and style which provoked these feelings.

C. The transformation of political, economic and social structures brings about changes in the relationship of man to his cultural heritage in general and to art in particular. This law governs any attempt to understand and reinstate the artistic heritage of the past.

To help to discover and appreciate a cultural tradition for the purpose of building up a national identity, a living assimilation of the heritage should go hand in hand with a critical examination of it.

1. For well known historical reasons, it happens that most of the physical objects composing this heritage have, against their wishes, so to speak, left Africa. When he looks at his heritage, the African today discovers an emptiness which leads him to experience his cultural heritage in imagination. He then finds comfort in the old ritual, trooping from festival to congress trying to define the African personality!

The search for national identity is preoccupying a number of Africans, mainly intellectuals anxious to rediscover the values of the past in order to find new bearings themselves; but this search is going amid such confusion and is beset by such entrenched prejudices that it is time to determine its prologomena. The problem of aesthetic education is the most appropriate field for this, all the more so as the most characteristic attitudes are to be found in the arts.

The cultural heritage, as we have said, is experienced in the imaginary mode, "that prevalence accorded, so psychoanalysis teaches, to a bodily need, the need to sleep" (J. Lacan, unpublished lecture). The fact that this mode, in the matter we are considering, is most often called revolutionary makes no difference. The African intellectual dreams, and if he dreams, he runs the risk of continuing to stay asleep!

Where the cultural heritage is concerned, any utterance, particularly in the imaginary mode, should be careful that it does not prolong, in the field in which it seeks revolutionary change, the very situation to which it seeks to awaken people.

2. A few quotations will illustrate what we are saying. Luckily, the authors of some of them are English-speaking and the others, French-speaking (looking at the signs of recent times, we could have added quotations in Portuguese!). These quotations speak of the inheritance of the past sometimes in order to express nostalgia for a golden age and invoke a paradise lost, and sometimes, though less often, to execrate it as otiose and obsolete.

(a) Let us look first of all at these extracts from a poem by Matala Mukadi (translated from the French):

"In the depths of the night of ages  
limps the echo of the burning of my art:  
Tervuren, give me back my sculptures.  
...I want to rebuild the temple  
which will be hung with bakuba velvet tapestry!

Carried off by the whirlwind of the times,  
the statuettes, weary of inspiring cubism,  
want to come back to me to breathe the air of home;  
Tervuren, give me back my pipes of Pan

...my fetishes want to leave the continent of Apollinaire  
...Tervuren, give me back my raffias

...my ancestors never adored these objects  
they venerated them  
as the Bonze does the Buddha, as the priest the Madonna,  
Tervuren, give me back my folklore!



...grandfather died from this pillage,  
...Tervuren, without rancour I claim my inheritance."

(Réveil dans un nid de flammes. Ed. Seghers)

(b) In reply to this, another poet says:

"Don't preserve my customs  
As some fine curios  
To suit some white historian's taste  
...  
My simple fathers  
In childlike faith believed all things  
It cost them much  
And their offspring lost a lot;  
They questioned not the lies of magic  
And fetish seemed to have some logic  
They were deceived by first appearance  
And now I need delivrance."

(D. Osadebay, Africa Sings, Stockwell, 1952)

In looking at the cultural inheritance of the past, both these poets use almost the same words in their respective languages: aïeux, simple fathers, fétiches, fetish, etc. Here, however, the resemblance ends. While one asks for his treasures to be restored, the other begs to be delivered from them. For one, they are objects of such great importance that "grandfather died" from having had them snatched from him. They are placed on equal footing with the Buddha or the Madonna. They are to be housed in the "temple" where they will be venerated in the ancestral cults. For the other poet, the reason why succeeding generations have become so backward is because their ancestors allowed themselves to be taken in by the magical illusions of these objects, which henceforth will be fit for nothing more than to satisfy the curiosity of European historians.

Magnificent as these two lyrics are, they bear witness to the confusion of values I spoke about earlier.

3. There is confusion but there are also entrenched prejudices which lead people to idealize an historical past in which life was continually bathed in a glorious sunset with palm trees waving in the breeze.

(a) "That city I oft remember,  
With gallant sons all in array  
Rising in clouded majesty:  
Such graceful grandeur clothed the city  
Of Benin - With radiant splendour"

(Moru-Yesufu Giwa, African Affairs)

(b) or again (translated from the French):

"The sun shone into my hut  
and my wives were beautiful and supple  
like palm trees in the evening breeze  
with death-like deeps."

(David Diop, after Black Orpheus, No. 1)

The mixture of prejudice and confusion, through a veritable reversal, gets into a kind of cultural narcissism and a confrontation and coalescence of self. It is the time for eccentricity with either the presumptuous rejection of the past or a passive resignation to a dual culture of night and day:

- (a) "When at break of day at riverside  
I hear the jungle drums telegraphing  
the mystic rhythm...  
Then I hear a wailing piano  
solo speaking of complex ways  
in tear-furrowed concerto  
...And I lost in morning mist  
of an age at a riverside keep  
wandering in the mystic rhythm  
of jungle drums and the concerto"

(Okara, Piano and Drums, Black Orpheus No. 7)

- (b) "I see the peoples breaking their idols in the flames and turning their backs on their sordid past...I see children teaching their parents what they have learned at school - that the Guinea-worm comes from bad water and the tapeworm from rotten meat - that dirt is the great enemy of the home and that cleanliness comes from God and is next to godliness". (Retranslated from the French)

(M.M.T. Aluko, One man, one wife, Lagos, 1959)

All art develops on a foundation of beliefs which give it its form. Under combined attack from the forces of attrition and corruption, the art of the "good old days" has been freed of its moral, social and educational functions. The quotations I have just given are evidence of the confusion which underlies the conception and production of present-day works of art.

In addition, commercial considerations and the techniques of rapid, multiple and widespread distribution in most cases produce works in which commercialism, immorality and bad taste take the place of any artistic criterion; hence the importance of aesthetic education through which to form taste, preserve morality, appreciate the legacy of the past, open the way for creativity, give hope and exhort to action.

D. The unity of man and nature is the basic premise of both science and art. To achieve it in the human person is the basic function of education. The preamble to the statutes of the International Society for Education through Art stresses that art is one of the most noble means of expression and communication, and that art education gives the young schoolchild a specific and fruitful conception of human relationships which will enable him, when he grows up, to live with other members of society in a spirit of respect, co-operation and understanding. The fact that art is considered to be a factor in the quest for cultural identity in young States is a favourable omen for the work which is being done towards the recovery of national individuality, but these efforts need to be methodical and such art needs to be produced and disseminated with a clear realization that works of art are not mere curios and that art is more than a mere hobby or pastime.

As we have already said, art has no real existence outside of works in which it is evident in the unity of the content with the formal elements, achieved by the work of artistic creation with sound, colours, volumes and gestures. This is why aesthetic education cannot be thought of as a purely gratuitous activity. It attempts to put together a doctrine which appeals to both feeling and to reason, which is why, in school and out-of-school, it deals with real objects.

1. In the matter of building a national identity, childhood is an eminently suitable time for moulding taste at the same time as shaping intelligence and forming the body and the moral sense. A symposium held in 1973 under the auspices of an African regional organization (Symposium on the Introduction of Art and Manual Education into Primary School, Yaoundé, 5-10 March 1973) gave a timely reminder to the African educationalist that his mission is to introduce the child to African life at the same time as forming in him the skills necessary for the development of society. With regard to the introductory study of art, the symposium recommended that an atmosphere should be established which would produce familiarity with works of art by pinning up reproductions of the African and world heritage in classrooms. This enables me to emphasize one basic aspect of the problem of aesthetic education, the rôle which the legacy of the past, the so-called cultural heritage, can play.

The objects composing this heritage are, it is true, the carriers of a message which can and must be absorbed by young minds, and this entitles the cultural heritage to be protected, preserved, reconstructed and recorded and also - why not? - used as the poet quoted just now demanded; but most of these objects, apart from the extremely few survivors of the "pillage" (from which "grandfather died"), are locked up like prisoners in distant museums, as the organizers of festivals of negro arts know only too well.

We know that the trend today is to write textbooks for African pupils which are abundantly illustrated "in order to give young Africans and Malagasies a better knowledge of and a more discerning pride in the beauty and diversity of the art of their countries" (IPAM series, Edicef). Here too, however, a list at the end of the textbooks shows that these objects are at present resting in "private collections" and museums far from Africa.

The result is that, as it is based to an excessive degree on the inheritance of forms created in the past, aesthetic education is in danger of degenerating into "élitism, hieratic mysticism and academic or populist imitation" (A. Siqueiros, Art et révolution, Ed. Sociales, Paris).

Where the "artistic heritage" is concerned, we must infuse a critical attitude: "we by no means refuse to use the literary and artistic forms of the past but they are reshaped and given new content" (Mao Tse-tung, On literature and art).

Criticism of the cultural heritage rejects the deliberate "quaintness" of the objects mass-produced for tourist offices and having no significance except that they are bizarre, strange and exotic.

2. The unity of school activity and life outside school shows the limits of the importance of the artistic heritage. We said about the works of art of the past that they were not just empty show and that they were active and functionally associated with practical use, the mysterious and the sacred. Where works of this kind are still being produced today, they have for the most part remained associated with magic and religious practices. On the Batéké plateau, for example, the weaving of the "leopardskin loin-cloth" worn by the chief has been continued to the present day. According to tradition, this loin-cloth was used as money and was hence a sign of power, enhancing the prestige of the person owning it. The chief wears it for ceremonies and special occasions like burials.

We should remember that the relationship of man with his cultural heritage in general is modified by social change. Thus, on the Batéké plateau, a political group called "the young revolutionaries" are up in arms against what they call "the old folk" or "reaction" and blame "the fetishes" which are remorselessly condemned to noisy auto-da-fe.

In aesthetic education, there is no substitute for association and contact with real works, but works of art are treated "so that they look old" and so that they preserve intact, for commercial purposes, the mysterious aura which determines their value as commodities.

In addition, there is a preconceived notion that the African, a vessel of emotions and rhythms, has an instinctive taste for art, and he is described as a "born dancer", "taking a simple delight in colour", etc.

Art which can be admired without effort, empirically is no longer a living art. Approached through its subject, art of this kind is made up of works which have become alien. We must no longer accept this inheritance and borrow from it to the detriment of our own creative activity.

3. Let us consider the example of music. It is found everywhere in Africa in every action, on every occasion and at all ages. It is involved in all aspects of the activities of men and women from fishing to hunting, work in the fields, the grinding of millet, marriage, burial (Francis Bebey, Musique de l'Afrique, Ed. Horizons de France).

Here and there, traditional music composed for and played on traditional instruments still indeed persists. Here and there, ethnological research missions - and, on occasions, timely national action - have made it possible to print anthologies of music, but these are most often very expensive which means that they are bought only by a very few music lovers.

The most outstanding feature, however, as anyone who listens to African broadcasting stations knows, is the flood of dance music and light music. This music is a delivery system for ideas and encourages attitudes to which no educationalist can remain indifferent. The effort to recover national identity, for example, includes advancement of the status of African women to that of full members of the national community. However, if you can understand the words, woman is the favourite target in many songs. She is celebrated in turn as a tempting sorceress, a source of conflict and unhappiness, and yet sought after to satisfy a frenzied sexuality.

Other topics do not escape the fashion for the deliberately "exotic" and stereotyped imitation. This leads to the snapping of the dialectical link between content and form.

In these circumstances, the educator runs the risk of being restricted to the incomplete rôle of an instructor in techniques.

4. In aesthetic education, however, technical exercises are not purely gratuitous activities. Let us take colour, for example, Mediaeval beliefs identified black (the colour) with the diabolical. The bas-reliefs in certain churches - the famous bibliae pauperum of the 16th century - depict the newly discovered continents. Africa is represented by an allegory of the Prince of Darkness and an enormous serpent entwined around a tree separates a black man from a black woman who is suckling her child. In the 18th century, certain dictionaries still gave the word black the meaning of sombre, sad or infernal. Today, we still find in a dictionary in common use black as meaning livid, bruised, dirty, unclean, sad, melancholy, atrocious, hateful. There is black-legging, black marketing, and looking at the black side, and black represents some kind of catastrophe whether fear, mourning or terror. It is the crow which is the harbinger of calamity whilst it is the dove which symbolizes peace!

Not only does black signify refinement and elegance, calm and dignity in the matter of clothing, however, but in many African traditions, it is white which is diabolical. Among the Bakongo or the Baluba, for example, white is the

colour of mourning, and does it not indeed symbolize the shroud? One burial rite requires the family of a dead person to cover their limbs and face with a white powder. Tradition, if strictly observed, requires this rite to be repeated until the day when the mourning, for a certain length of time, can be expressed in the wearing of white clothes. Also, among the Bakongo, for instance, the supreme pact between an African Faust and an African Mephistopheles is sealed by the sacrifice of a "white-feathered fowl".

The teaching of art sets out to be a living experience. This is the way in which such teaching is an education. Vitality of feeling, however, depends on the quality of the technique which expresses it. Technical exercises can thus be an opportunity for dynamic expression of content: the study of colour can bring about the rehabilitation of the morphology and anatomy of the individuals in whom the national character is expressed! Otherwise, as we shall demonstrate, technical exercises will be nothing more than a pretext for "learning".

5. In a survey carried out by the "Revue d'Esthétique dans le monde" (Nos. 1 and 2, Klincksieck, Paris, 1972) it was found that in one African university the teaching of aesthetics was "primarily a philosophical subject linked scarcely at all with artistic research and still not very popular among artists".

Here, as revealed by this survey, are the titles of the theses being written by the students in 1972 (ibid., page 243).

(a) On art

Corneille's dramatic system.

Work and inspiration according to Flaubert's correspondence.

Jules Romains' conception of art as expressed in his Souvenirs et confidences.

(b) The study of the imaginary

The vocabulary of the imaginary in Henri Bosco.

The marvellous in the work of Nerval, Chateaubriand and Alain Fournier.

(c) Thematic analysis

Life images in Giono's novels.

The importance of the water theme in the work of Chateaubriand.

The importance of dream and memory in Verlaine.

The importance of the dream in Proust.

I must make it clear that these were African students, mentioned by name, working in Africa in an African university!

These theses were being produced, of course, under a director of studies who is the author of a thesis on "The aesthetics of Henri Bremond" and who is engaged in publishing a volume on the analysis of tales with a theme of quest (e.g. the quest for the Holy Grail, the quest for "le grand Meaulnes", the quest of the heroes of Henri Bosco). To my mind, this illustrates the difficulty inevitably encountered by any African project for aesthetic education.

The historical causes of Africa's contact with Europe raise further problems with respect to the idea of culture in general and of art and its teaching in particular.

It is to the loss of their native functions that statues, masks and dances owe their present excellence as objets d'art. What a strange fate has befallen "negro art" to travel from the tribal sanctuary to the curio stall. It has been by turns "an object of curiosity, then of disdain and contempt, an item of ethnographic study, and then suddenly elevated, thanks to a few modern painters, to the dignity of a source of inspiration, and finally, today, a sought-after commodity" (J. Laude, Les arts d'Afrique noire, Ed. Le livre de Poche).

This makes it difficult for Africans to agree on an ordered system of plastic values for the sculptured, engraved or modulated symbolic forms which are inseparable from the little-known spiritual legacy and which have become almost foreign to us. We must hope that research being conducted under the auspices of Unesco with a view to writing a history of Africa will fill many of these gaps.

The aim is to be able to express oneself in one's own way, in complete economic, political and intellectual independence. This is true of education and particularly of aesthetic education. The introduction of tests of art education is essential (African symposium, page 36).

It is a good thing to encourage the practice of art, but the principles governing such a decision still need to be carefully defined. To state (African symposium, page 8) that the African child has a feeling for rhythm and possesses an emotional character which can easily veer towards lyricism, that he is inclined to the supernatural and that the animist tradition prevents him from considering natural objects or elements in an objective way and that he takes a superficial rather than an in-depth view, is to state ideas which prepare the ground for the production of cheap tourist trinkets.

In any case, the students at "art schools", where these exist, are drawn mainly from the migratory stream of pupils on the lookout for somewhere to study. These schools thus take on the thankless task of temporarily stemming delinquency by fostering hopes of an artistic career which the absence of job opportunities soon dissipates. The staff thus come to be thought of as art-teaching functionaries.

6. Despite this, the moral, social, technical and aesthetic aims of art show that art education is an irreplaceable aid in developing the essential functions of thought and action. Works of art provide a practical vehicle for the teaching of general history. Art gives concrete expression to the trends in a given civilization, it encourages the integration of the individual into society. It can also refute a number of preconceived ideas: for example, the fact that the art of metal-casting frequently coexists with that of ceramics suggests that this skill must have existed together with industries. The school should thus not aim to train artists at all costs. It will touch different people in different ways; aesthetic education will be integrated with the whole of the educational process for all the people, both in school and out of school, where sensibility and moral concepts are also formed. The teacher will thus not only be an instructor in techniques but will also teach pupils how to understand the world aesthetically and how to "think with their eyes".

The ideal of aesthetic education, then, must be "to unite productive work with education and gymnastics, not only as a way of increasing social production but also as the one and only way of producing whole men". (Marx, Capital, book 1).

The way things are one would think there was no need for continuity or follow-through in the forms of expression of African art. Sculptures continue to be made as in the distant past, and when there is any innovation it is most frequently, as in music, the counterfeit copy of an art which is not original.

This is partly an economic and social problem: artists are forced to sell all kinds of artistic "objects" to the tourists, and it is surely significant that cultural bodies usually come under the ministries of tourism. But it is also a problem of education. Who lays down the criteria for aesthetic judgements? what should such criteria be? Who teaches art? This is the problem of the expression of the personality in art. Africans are face to face with a difficulty of this kind. In addition to economic and social circumstances, all kinds of ideas are creeping in which do nothing to encourage the understanding and development of the artistic idiom. The term "negro art" bandied about by specialists reigns supreme and is in fact responsible for a stagnation of form and technique. This is why one is thrown back on Corneille, Chateaubriand and Flaubert!

The cinema and television (where the Red Indian is the archetype of the exotic) by the power of the image spread ideas which hinder self-knowledge. When little Walosso (two years old) was watching a television programme about Africa recently, he shouted out "Injuns!". They were, in fact, farmers taking part in the Ujamaa experiment!

Item 7 of the Agenda implies that aesthetic education should at the same time be a factor in international understanding which will help with the perception and appreciation of the universality of an ideal of beauty in different forms and the notion of an artistic heritage common to all mankind. This means, I think, that we should pool the best that we have, enriching each other with our respective differences.

This is the task of aesthetic education: to teach art in schools and to promote the creation outside of school of structures which will encourage forms of expression in African art in which the old helps the new and the foreign helps the native. Museums, festivals and exhibitions are indeed excellent stimulants, but environment, housing, architecture and knowledge of the historic and cultural meaning of the art of the past are the things which enable art to fulfil its function as an integral educational instrument.

## CONCLUSION

In the course of this survey, we have continually seen art in varied aspects of life from which it is inseparable. The individual who creates art is part of a system of relationships and communication between himself and his work on the one hand and society and all its members on the other.

This means that art must be free to emerge from clandestinity and commercialism so that, by means of a productive criticism which sets free the creative powers, the foreign can help the native and the old can help the new.

The reason why Mexican mural painting, by its creative impetus, influenced fields as varied as history, archaeology, linguistics and architecture, was that through a collective effort, it drew from the historical heritage its own distinctive forms of expression.

The impact of the cultural revolution in China has, however, been powerful enough for it now to be clear that if they are to be effective, the concrete expressions of the process of inwardly digesting the significance of the national heritage require a mental structure capable of receiving the message carried thereby.

This is the outlook of a new man, the product of an education in which the aim is to "instruct the people and give them, with the taste for learning,

an understanding of history and philosophy, a veneration for justice and the true joy of work and social living." (Proudhon, Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale).

This is the "full man", "homo aestheticus", able to break down the old barriers and reconstruct reality in order "to give a new sense to the words of the tribe".

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