1 Education, Socialization, and the Aesthetic

We get used to schools. We hardly notice how peculiar they are; how they differ from other social settings and institutions. For example, when people work hard in school and achieve some success, they get letter grades. These are symbolic rewards, not real ones. We shrug and say, it's always been that way. We even think it *has* to be that way in order for education to go on.

Consider the most familiar feature of American public schools, the classroom. Inside are two or three dozen young people listening to an adult who talks most of the time. They all stay in the room most of the day, five days a week. When the children get older, the classroom is emptied every fifty-five minutes, and it is filled with another batch of young people.

No characterization of this setting captures its fundamental absurdity better than Albert Shanker's:

> Imagine that we had no schools, that the United States was a very poor country that for centuries had been sending its kids off to work in the mines or the fields at the age of three. All of a sudden we discover great wealth and are about to design a school system. What if somebody said: Let's build huge buildings and divide them into classrooms that seat thirty-five or forty children apiece. Let's bring those kids in at 8:30 in the morning and make them sit in those seats until 3:00 in the afternoon, and during that time an adult will stand in front of them and talk. Well, someone else might reasonably ask: What makes you think these kids would sit still and keep quiet? And why would any adult in his right mind want to be locked up with them under such conditions?[1]

The only conceivable answer is this: they get used to it. When children are first sent off to school they have no choice about it. Some of

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them resent it, but at the age of six they are no match for the adults in charge. As the years go by, the misfits either respond to special treatment or they disappear from the school system. From among those who stay in school the longest come the people who will become teachers. After all that schooling, it seems to them quite normal to spend most of their day in a single room, talking in front of two or three dozen children. It doesn't seem absurd at all.

Socialization

If we wanted to *educate* those two or three dozen children, the standard structure of the school classroom does seem absurd. How could that sort of organization promote the cultivation of critical thought? of social skills or moral conscience? of aesthetic taste or the uniqueness that distinguishes individuals from one another? For these ends, the standard school classroom appears to be as absurd as Shanker says it is.

But school classrooms may not seem so absurd if we conceive of them as being arranged for ends other than those just noted. Suppose we gathered all those children into a classroom with a single adult not to educate them, but to socialize them. Suppose what we really wanted to do was not cultivate critical thought, aesthetic taste, or individuality, but get them used to the authority of an adult, to the routines of a bureaucratic institution, and to conforming to the behavior of others in a large group. Then the organization of the classroom wouldn't seem so absurd. It might even be well suited to achieving our goals.

The kind of socialization just described might not appeal to everybody, but that doesn't mean there's something sinister about socialization itself. In fact, no society could do without it:

> If it were necessary for a living being to grope *de novo* for an appropriate response to every stimulus from the environing situation, threats to its integrity from many sources would promptly effect its disorganization. This is why, with respect to that which is most vital, the reaction of an organ is predetermined; certain modes of behaving necessarily recur under similar circumstances. . . . Social life is subject to the same imperatives, and regularity is no less indispensable for it. At each point in time, it is necessary that the functioning of familial, vocational, and civic life be assured; to this end, it is altogether

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> necessary that the person be free from an incessant search for appropriate conduct. Norms must be established which determine what proper relationships are, and to which people conform. Deference to established norms is the stuff of our daily duties.[2]

The process of acquiring the norms to which all the members of a society conform is called socialization. Our concern throughout most of this book will be with education. But because children get socialized both in and out of school, and because the conditions of education and of socialization are so different, we must be clear enough about how they differ so we don't mistake socializing practices for educative ones.

Virtually all children get socialized in every society—ancient or modern, primitive or industrial, authoritarian or democratic. Socialization is needed by adults as well as children. On the one hand, children must learn acceptable ways of getting on with others, and they need to learn how to support themselves. On the other hand, adults need the responsible participation of the next generation in order to carry on activities that maintain the social order. To be socialized, then, is to become effectively adapted to the patterns of behavior, the customs, and the values of the social group into which you are born.

Socialization is mandatory; no one is excepted from it. People who are not socialized are (depending on the particular society) ostracized, institutionalized, or put to death. And because it is so universal, it is not reserved for special groups like the gifted, an ethnic elite, or the rich or the poor. But the members of certain groups or subcultures may be socialized in different ways.

Because it is universal, socialization does not depend on specially trained teachers or specialized techniques. After all, children have been socialized for millennia—long before schools were invented, long before teaching became a specialized occupation. Parents and siblings, neighbors and the extended family all participate in socializing children.

As long as adults are in agreement about the value, the scope, and the limits of their major activities—the production of food, shelter, and clothing; the beliefs and practices governing family relations and political and social forms; ceremonial and sacramental occasions, and so forth—socialization can proceed quite unself-consciously. Its procedures will be simple and direct. When the young are not playing, they participate as best they can in adult activities.

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Participation is accompanied to a greater or lesser extent by conversation, wherein the young receive instructions, explanations, warnings, corrections, praise, and criticism. And sometimes a hug or a smile, a kick or a scowl.

In most societies, socialization goes on informally—at home, in the neighborhood, at work. Schools are not needed. But the societies that have developed in the twentieth century are different. American society, for example, has a political system that is at once both representative and unrepresentative, democratic and oligarchic. Its culture embraces not only the traditions of many different nationality groups, but traditions within Western culture as disparate as Christian fundamentalism and Enlightenment rationalism. Amid all these incongruities, the pressures created by developing technology and international competition have resulted in constant cultural change—change often accompanied by conflicts of values, attitudes, and practices. Thus it has become difficult for the ordinary, informal mechanisms of socialization to be effective with the young. That may be why schools have taken on so many socializing functions, and why so many school practices seem so absurd *when they are mistaken for educational practices.*

For these reasons, contemporary societies use their schools to socialize the young. This may complicate and even thwart efforts to educate them. But the need for socialization cannot be dismissed. This will become clearer if we look at an example or two of why it is so hard to socialize children *out* of school.

All societies inculcate in their young habits and attitudes toward work. These habits and attitudes will differ, depending on whether the society depends on agriculture or hunting, whether it is stable or nomadic, whether its climate is tropical or temperate, whether its resources are abundant or scarce. But children in contemporary postindustrial societies like the United States find themselves at once members of several different groups, each of which tends to inculcate a different attitude toward work.[3]

By means of its curriculum and its instructional practices, the school socializes children into work that is competitive and almost exclusively utilizes reading, writing, and calculating (this is often indiscriminately called "intellectual" work). But these same children may live in homes that inculcate the value of manual labor, and socialize them into work attitudes that are interpersonal and cooperative. Away from home and school, children's peer groups may socialize their members into attitudes that are contemptuous of ordinary kinds of work.

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Traditionally, children are socialized into the values and customs of what we would call the "wider" society. But when values and attitudes and traditions in the wider society differ about various kinds of practices (like work, sex and marriage, drug and alcohol use, abortion and divorce, the right to strike, minority hiring, ad infinitum), the ordinary sort of socialization becomes impossible. The process breaks down as children face multiple and often competing values and traditions. There *is* no simple, unitary "wider" society into which the young can be socialized.

There is another and equally daunting obstacle to the ordinary processes of socialization: the growing separation between the socializers and those who are to be socialized. Throughout most of the history of human civilization, children were raised in a family or an extended family. Plenty of adults, in varying degrees of intimacy, were available to participate in the socialization of the young. But now, adults are becoming a scarce commodity in the world of children.

To begin with, industrial and corporate growth along with rapid modes of transportation have produced a mobile population. For many children this means growing up in a "nuclear" family whose only adult is mom or dad (or sometimes both). Uncles and aunts, older cousins and grandparents, are all back in Pittsburgh. While socialization is a relatively simple process when it takes place in a community, it's a heavy burden when it falls on two adults (heavy enough to divide the adults, split marriages, and break down families). The distances that now separate homes from workplaces often remove one of the adults from the everyday lives of small children, and the economic and social conditions that have sent 40 percent of America's mothers into full-time jobs have even further reduced the contact between children and caring adults.

When children reach the age of five or six they are sent to school. Leaving home further reduces their contact with adults, since a teacher, responsible for two or three dozen or more children, cannot effectively socialize any of them to the world *outside* the school. But if this is so, you may wonder what sort of socialization *is* going on in schools? A single adult in a school classroom cannot socialize a large group of children to the world outside. But with the support of a *system* of time divisions, discipline practices, promotion policies, examinations, and articulated grades and schools, that adult can socialize children *to the school system*. Most children can and do learn to adjust to the customs, values, and regular practices of the school. They learn this uncritically, without giving it much thought.

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Thus in addition to the absurdity of running schools that do not educate is another absurdity: they do not socialize, either, except to the very narrow world of the school itself. Since the world of the school is very different in important respects from the world outside it, one may wonder what is to be gained by this narrow form of socialization.

One thing can be said with assurance. If children are not socialized to the school system, they will become alienated and probably be quite unhappy. They will surely not learn anything that adults would like them to, and they will probably drop out of school early. So it can be said that socializing the young to the school system enables them to survive in that system as long as they are in it.

But that would be the ultimate absurdity of the school system: that it operates only to accustom its inmates to itself. Before we can swallow that conclusion, we must ask more seriously whether schools educate children. For unless some significant education is going on, it would appear that schools serve only as holding pens, allowing the authorities twelve years to sift some of them out for further schooling in colleges. But the question of whether education does or can go on in schools depends first on clearly distinguishing education from socialization.

Socialization and Education

There is no need to define so elusive a term as 'education' here. We've seen what socialization is like, and all we need is to be aware of what makes education something other than that. We've already seen that socialization excludes none of the young. By means of it a society inculcates and thereby preserves what is vitally important and agreed on. Whatever 'education' might involve, then, we can expect that it will exclude some children and that it will transmit things that are neither vitally important for everyone to know, nor agreed on by everyone in the society. Still, this only indicates what education *doesn't* do.

Until the middle of the present century, only a minority of people in a society received an education. They usually got it from a tutor or in a school. Males from wealthy families were taught what was needed to maintain what their families possessed (for example, social skills, horsemanship, the skills of combat, and most important, how to manage one's inferiors). What these privileged males learned thus differed markedly from the understandings, values, and

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beliefs into which *all* the members of their respective societies were socialized. In the middle ages, boys who were to become priests also received an education and, shortly thereafter, so did prospective physicians, lawyers, and teachers. These professional men acquired some skills not usually expected of the sons of the ruling classes: the ability to read and write.

In Western history, then, the expansion of education, the development of schools, and the growth of literacy were all associated. An educated man was a literate man: a man who could read. Reading was a more revolutionary enterprise than you might think. Of course, it enabled people to examine what was agreed on in their society. But it also exposed people to understandings that were unique to different societies, and—what turned out to be an enormous threat to the Church and to the ruling classes—it exposed people to different and sometimes conflicting opinions about what ought to be believed, valued, and done in their own society. Although you might never guess it from the way reading is taught in today's schools, it has been a significant instrument of social change.

But that puts us a little ahead of the story. For now, as we distinguish education from socialization, we can see how the former has come to signify a process whereby the young learn how to read, write, and calculate and, by virtue of such learnings, come into contact with ideas and understandings that will help them to work productively and live well in a world where jobs are specialized, where agreement is not universal, and where beliefs, values, and habits of action are often in conflict.

Of course, the simple ability to decode the written word, and mere exposure to ideas, does not necessarily make a person any wiser. For *that* to happen, one must learn how to *do* things with ideas. But for the moment, we need only distinguish the features of education from those of socialization and then ask, can we find *both* of these processes going on in schools?

First, let's summarize the distinctions made thus far. The socialization that affects all children focuses on everyday but important social agreements. It aims not to cultivate thought, but simply to adjust the young to their world, and it succeeds when the learner effectively acquires values and modes of action that are approved by society.

Education, more selectively dispensed, focuses on things considered important by more specialized groups (e.g., ministers, biologists, literary scholars), even when members of those groups do not always agree with each other. Because it deals with material that is

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more specialized, that is new, and that is often in dispute, education, unlike socialization, aims at understanding and critical judgment. It succeeds when learners can find their own reasons for what they believe and for what they think is worth doing.

Socialization is characterized by imitation, participation, and obedience to instruction and command. Its outcome is the acquisition of adaptive habits, skills, and attitudes. The processes of education (which will be focal to this book) are far more subtle, adding to the above processes two-way communication, initiative, creativity, and criticism. The outcome of educational processes is the acquisition of attitudes and dispositions, knowledge and skills, that are individualized and critically thoughtful.[4]

The School As Agent of Socialization

We ask again, can education as well as socialization be found in schools? Although the public has been led to believe that schools aim at education, that belief may be mistaken. While socialization is expected of all children, history does not reveal any society that has tried to educate all of its children. More specialized and more demanding than socialization, education calls for aptitudes and abilities in learners that are not universally shared. Nothing in principle prevents a society from *trying* to educate an entire new generation. But doing so would mean that significant differences among children, and significant differences in educational aims and procedures, would have to be acknowledged and acted on. That's because education, unlike socialization, aims not at common beliefs, values, and habits, but at individuality, diversity, and the disposition and the ability to make and act on reasoned choices. Are schools organized to achieve such aims?

Virtually identical physical arrangements are provided for children in schools. Each child has a standard-size chair about a foot away from other such chairs in a standard-size classroom. Everyone is subject to similar organizational and scheduling procedures, to a curriculum that has become increasingly the same for all, and to a testing and evaluation system that is becoming universal for all. These more or less uniform structures and procedures are appropriate for socialization, but not for education.

You may object that the aims and outcomes of schools demonstrate a commitment to education. But we must not mistake rhetoric for reality. Many of us would like to turn children into thoughtful,

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creative, critical, and unique individuals. But the system of examinations in schools is deliberately and elaborately designed to produce just the opposite. At the end of each semester, in their effort to qualify for college admission, our young people all strive to discover the *same* correct answers to the same or similar questions. When we (or the teachers, or the test publishers) know the right answer beforehand, we can hardly appeal to the creativity of our students, any more than we can appeal to their reasoned judgment about disputed issues.

Classrooms that keep students passive and prompt them to make only the responses their teachers look for are, of course, the rational way to prepare for exams. For those who succeed in school and therefore remain longest in the system, the outcome is a set of habits (especially classroom, study, and test-taking habits) that enable them to conform to the demands of the system. *That* is not an educational outcome. It is a matter of effective socialization. To say that a student is successful usually means that she was effectively socialized to the school system.[5]

The Need for Education

There are good reasons for schools to try to socialize the young. But trying to foster education is not just a romantic ideal, an idle wish. For when social practices and social values are diverse and often at odds with each other, people who have been merely socialized cannot understand or sympathize with viewpoints and practices other than their own. In a simple society, socialization produces people who think and act alike. They constitute a community. But in a complex and changing society like ours, socialization is likely to produce groups that are mistrustful and intolerant of one another.

Socialization requires firsthand experience (you don't get socialized by reading about what other people believe), and because schools are isolated from the rest of society, children are adapted only to the school system itself. Thus most of the young in complex industrial societies are adjusted, more or less, to the school, and their values and attitudes toward the rest of the world are the consequence of the socializing agency (usually parents or peers) that makes the strongest impact on them. As noted above, the result of all this is often the creation of hostile and intolerant groups—peaceful as long as they don't have to interact with one another, but not ready to work together on enterprises for the common good.

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More, or more effective socialization cannot make this situation any better. What is required in a society that values diversity is for people to learn how to become thoughtful about their differences, and to learn how to overcome disagreements by recognizing their common concerns. Only education can achieve this, and that's why education is not a romantic ideal, but a practical necessity for a society like ours.[6] The sociologist Durkheim said as much nearly three quarters of a century ago:

> Since social life [in simple societies] is quite self-consistent . . . custom and unreflective tradition are quite adequate. Indeed, custom and tradition have such power and prestige as to leave no place for reasoning and questioning.
>
> On the other hand, the more societies become complex, the more difficult [it is] for morality to operate as a purely automatic mechanism. Circumstances are never the same, and as a result the rules of morality require intelligence in their application. Society is continually evolving . . . [and] this requires that morality not be internalized in such a way as to be beyond criticism or reflection . . . Individuals, while conforming, must take account of what they are doing; and their conformity must not be pushed to the point where it completely captures intelligence.[7]

Socialization occurs naturally in people's everyday interactions. Education does only sometimes. Socialization maintains a society as it is. Education is called for only when the natural processes of socialization are insufficient to maintain social stability. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the stability of the community of nations is seriously threatened. Many nations possess the technology to destroy most living things on earth. Just the unregulated pursuit of profit by multinational corporations has resulted in serious damage to the atmosphere and the water resources, the farmlands and the forests of the earth. The same economic forces that have led to environmental destruction have also resulted in human misery to an unprecedented extent, in terms of hunger, disease, and the loss of freedom. Once typical of the third world, this misery is now common in industrial nations. It is apparent in the streets of every major city in America, and it can be found in many of America's hospitals, asylums, prisons, and schools—although it is hidden in such places from public view.

When such a crisis reaches international proportions it is wise to seek political solutions. But political negotiations are typically

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undertaken by people whose socialization was predicated on world conditions very different from those that exist today. Older generations grew up adjusting to a world that was. Their children were socialized to that world. To an obsolescent socialization has been added the growing influence of world capitalism, which socializes the young to become competitive consumers. Now there is reason to believe that the resources of the earth can no longer survive this kind of socialization. It produces attitudes that fit this precarious world as well as the rearing of African bushmen prepares for the operation of jet aircraft, automatic weapons, and nuclear power plants. Socialization cannot be depended on to produce people who can successfully negotiate for the survival of life on this planet. Only education will enable future generations to understand themselves and the world in such a way that political solutions will make sense.

Most people think that school is the place to get an education. But because the facts don't support this assumption, we need to discover what changes in schooling would be hospitable to education. Before we consider the institutional setting, however, we must ask, what are the conditions under which education becomes possible? We do not ask what causes education. It cannot be caused at all, because it involves the voluntary participation of the learner. Certain kinds of socialization can be caused, but for education, only certain kinds of conditions can be established. This book is about those conditions.

Education for Individuals and the Quality of Experience

We have seen that socialization produces conformity to the group, while education results in independent judgment. People who are only socialized can be expected to do what others do. Those who are both socialized and educated can be expected to do what others do if they find sufficient reasons for doing so. The educated person, exercising judgment, acts as an individual. This doesn't mean that she necessarily rejects the group. It means that she thoughtfully considers the appropriateness of what the group is up to.[8]

There are two other senses of the term, individual, that are not intended in this discussion. To avoid misunderstanding they will be noted here. In one sense, "individual" refers to the fact that every person is *different* from every other. Differences in this sense are the result of the combined effects of genetics, chance environmental influences, and whim. In contrast, *"individual" is used in the pre-*

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sent discussion to refer to differences which result from choices that people deliberately make.

Individuality, which is the concern of education, must also be distinguished from another sense of "individual": the sense that is implied when we speak of individualism. Individualism is largely an economic term, referring to the capacity of a single person to be self-sufficient. Individualism thus refers to a point of view about the capacities of people. This point of view is not empirically testable. Can people *really* manage for themselves in this complex society? What would it *mean* to be really self-sufficient? And since it underlies a broader point of view about how an economic system ought to work (on the basis of competitive individual entrepreneurship) it is part of an ideology. When the terms "individual" and "individuality" are used in the following discussion, no reference is intended to the ideology of individualism, or individual entrepreneurship. I mean only by "individual" a person whose education has enabled her to develop, on the basis of her own reasoned judgments, a range of unique talents and skills.

Education, then, is concerned with individuals (this is why most events that occur in a lecture hall *may* be informative, but cannot be educative). As we'll see later on, the education of individuals is sometimes best carried on within groups of people. But just as the focus or aim of socialization is on the community or social group, so the focus of education is on the individual. And because individual persons are the main concern of educators, what must be of primary importance to educators is the quality of the experience of learners.

The quality of learners' experience is not ordinarily regarded as a high priority by educators. School personnel are usually focused on the material thought appropriate to teach—that is, on the curriculum. They are also concerned about the psychology of child and adolescent development. All of this is important, because it helps us establish aims for education and it helps us recognize limits on the possibilities of growth. Yet an exclusive concern with the curriculum and child development can blind us to what is most critical for an education to occur at all. That critical element is the character and quality of the learner's experience. To be effective, educators must have a concern for what is happening to learners from *their* point of view, in terms of how they feel, or apprehend their experience. The welfare of the community must never be lost from view, but that is the special concern of socialization. For education, the growth of individuals is primary. And that growth can be fostered only when

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the experience of those individuals is taken very seriously, understood, and enhanced.

The procedures of socialization are relatively easy to understand. They have been effectively carried on in all human societies, including our own, until at least quite recently. But the procedures of education have been far less easy to understand. That's partly because education has been confused with socialization, and partly because adults have cared more for educational outcomes than they have for the processes on which those outcomes depend. It's also partly because of the growth of a class of professional educators willing to call any enterprise "educational" (including the techniques of animal training) as long as it was regarded by their peers as publishable research. To dispel misunderstanding about the procedures of education, we must attend, first and foremost, to the quality of the experience of the young whom we would educate. But we need to get clear about the meaning of this phrase, "the quality of experience."

The term "quality" suggests value of some sort; we speak of high and low quality. We would like learners to have experiences of high quality, but what *constitutes* a high-quality experience? The phrase will be used here to indicate an experience that is valued for its own sake. Sometimes it's called "intrinsically valuable," or "consummatory" (in contrast to "instrumental"). A lot of people eat popcorn when they go to the movies. Popcorn may have nutritional value, but that's not why most people eat it. They eat it just because they like to. Because it tastes good, or because it gives them something to do. Eating popcorn is thus intrinsically valuable. It is a high-quality experience.

But you may object to this. "Wait a minute," you may say. "Eating *popcorn* a high-quality experience? Let's get serious! Any nitwit can eat popcorn! What's so 'high' about the quality of *that* experience? Now, consider listening to a Mozart piano concerto. *There's* a genuinely high-quality experience."

There is no quarrel with this objection. Listening to the concerto *is* a high-quality experience for many people. But to say that an experience is of high quality implies no comparisons to other experiences. That's why eating popcorn is also a high-quality experience for those who like to do it. If you should ask whether listening to Mozart isn't a *higher*-quality experience than eating popcorn, there's no answer. It depends on who's having the experience.

There is a tendency among many people to arrange the things they value into a hierarchy, from high to low. Then they make judgments about others on the basis of whether they cherish the same

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hierarchies. For example, there are people who put expensive automobiles high in their scale of values, while others put Mozart on the top of the list. Still others may value an evening at the movies, eating popcorn. Quite often it turns out that the people in each of these groups have a low opinion of those in the other groups, largely because they don't share the same values. This is unfortunate—a form of snobbery, regardless of what occupies the top spot on one's list of values. For there is no good reason why the sorts of things that afford high quality to one person's experience ought to afford high quality to another person's experience. People's biological structures and life experiences are very different. You may denigrate or exalt the values and tastes of other people, but such judgments don't alter the fact that other people may be *having* experiences that for them are high in quality.

Keeping this in mind, we can see that any number of events might contribute to experience that one regards as being high in quality, or intrinsically valuable. Some people write letters to friends, not because they have an important message to convey, but just because they enjoy it. That's an intrinsically valuable experience for them. Some people like to go to the park at the end of a long day and feed the ducks; for them, that's a high-quality experience. Some people find high quality in the experience of running in marathon races, others find it in visiting art museums. Many people find sexual intimacy to be intrinsically valuable; there are others who find high quality in the experience of work, who feel that their jobs are intrinsically valuable.

Later on it will be argued that one important aim for education is to enable young people to find high quality in a greater range of experiences than those that they presently value. And because there are reasons for believing that some things and events in the world are more likely than others to initiate high-quality experiences for people (there are objective factors in taste as well as subjective ones), it will be argued that education should help learners to discover what can function for them as *sources* of high-quality experience. But for now, the aim is only to make clear what it means to say that a person is having an experience of high quality. And to make equally clear why the quality of experience is so important in a person's education.

The Aesthetic

The fine arts afford experiences that are ordinarily regarded as being high in quality. Those experiences are called aesthetic. The term

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"aesthetic" applies to any intrinsically valued experience of something that has been artistically organized. The phrase, "artistically organized" is what distinguishes an experience that is simply high in quality from one that has aesthetic quality. Eating popcorn and listening to Mozart can both be high-quality experiences. But since there is no artistic organization in the eating of popcorn it cannot, as Mozart can, be experienced aesthetically. A person's experience of visual art is aesthetic when she responds with satisfaction to relationships of color, patterns of light and dark, and so on. The experience of music is aesthetic when one responds emotionally to relationships of rhythm, melody, dynamics, and so forth. To literature, response is aesthetic when a reader is moved by the way in which language creates convincing relationships between plot and character.

But the reference of the term "aesthetic" is not limited to the fine arts. Other kinds of high-quality experiences are referred to as "aesthetic" because they resemble features of experiences of the fine arts. Because they have educational value, it will be helpful to see how experiences unrelated to the arts can be said to have aesthetic quality.

Few people eating lunch at MacDonald's think of their experience as aesthetic. But aesthetic quality may dominate the experience of dining at a gourmet restaurant. Dinner is served by people who may legitimately consider themselves artists. Diners, of course, may not appreciate the labor and the creativity that went into the creation of a recipe, the locating of ingredients, and the cooking itself. Once the meal is prepared, the setting of the table and the presentation of food is done with attention to their visual effect. The flavors and textures of the foods and beverages, and their sequence, are organized to so as to enhance one another. Even the conversation is in part regulated by the meal (it would be "bad taste" to be critical of your companions, boorish to discuss strategies for dealing with a business problem). Under these conditions, artistically organized features of the meal contribute to a consummatory experience—one that is enjoyed for its own sake.

Let's return to some of the everyday instances of high-quality experience mentioned earlier to see how they can be aesthetic in quality. Writing a letter can be very satisfying when we successfully search for a way of articulating what we mean; when we put into words an idea that we never had before; when we imagine what our reader will think when she reads what we've written. *What* we wrote may not qualify as literature, but our experience writing it was sim-

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ilar to the creative experience of a literary artist, and that experience is normally described as aesthetic.[9]

A visit to the park to feed the ducks after a long day can help a person disengage from the problems and routines of the day's work. Relaxation comes as thought is freed from daily concerns. Exhilaration attends the spontaneous entry into a world of hopes and dreams, or perhaps just into a world of hungry, squawking ducks. That's high-quality experience for those who have it, and it is akin to the experience of many artists who must wrench themselves from the everyday and the ordinary in order to cultivate the spontaneity and fresh perspectives that characterize their art. For the artist, this freedom and exhilaration is called aesthetic, and it is no less so when experienced by other people cultivating *their* ideal worlds. For all, the experience is felt to be intrinsically valuable.

Running long distances might be punishing for a lot of people, but there are those who see it as a challenge, who condition their minds and their bodies through practice, and who experience an almost ineffable satisfaction in overcoming the pain of running the distance and achieving the goal they set for themselves. There is a similarity in such an experience to what Michelangelo must have felt as he worked on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, lying on his back, reaching upward endlessly for what must have seemed a lifetime. Those who assisted the great painters of ceilings—the Tiepolos and the Tintorettos—may have toiled as laboriously as they did, although they achieved no more fame or glory than most of the people who run marathons. Only the quality of experience can explain their labors. Not its outcome—crossing the finish line or applying paint to the last empty space—but the continuous, extended experience of challenge, thought, effort, hope, satisfaction, followed by the next challenge—the next mile, the next hill, the next color, the next space—and the consequent feelings that are similar for runners and for painters. In both, they are aesthetic in quality.

These examples show how everyday, nonartistic experiences can be regarded as aesthetic when they are high in quality and have features that resemble artistic forms of organization. Later on (in Chapter 4) it will be necessary to formulate in more explicit ways just what an artistic form of organization is, for it is *that* which makes a high-quality experience an aesthetic one. But now we need only note the connection between high-quality experience, artistic forms of organization, and the aesthetic. Earlier it was said that education is dependent on the quality of a student's experience. Yet there is no reason to believe that high quality alone will guarantee

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education. People may enjoy eating popcorn, but they won't learn much from it. On the other hand, they can learn a lot from listening to Mozart, writing letters, and running marathons. Thus when it was said that education is dependent on the quality of a student's experience, the implication is that *education is dependent on the aesthetic quality of a student's experience.*

One of the main tasks of this book will be to show that only by deliberate attention to the aesthetic quality of the experiences of learners will learning actually occur. That is, to get the kind of learning we want, educators must arrange school conditions in such a way that the experience felt by students is aesthetic in quality. As the above examples suggest, this does not mean that learning must always be like reading a novel or watching a movie. It often entails hard work, practice, and even drill. But it does mean that these usually arduous activities can succeed only in contexts where the students' experience is aesthetic, and that these contexts won't appear unless they are deliberately set up by teachers or other adults. The remainder of this book is organized to show why this is the case, how it can be managed, and what kinds of obstacles to doing it will have to be overcome.

The Argument of the Book

In the next chapter I discuss some practical implications of the idea of democracy. If these implications are not well understood, education will be an aimless undertaking that will actually undermine a democratic way of life. A little more will be said about this at the conclusion of this chapter.

Five chapters make up Part II, Educational Ideals: What's Possible, and How. This part of the book discusses the kinds of conditions that must be created in order to promote learning. It begins, however, with a discussion of traditional educational aims that have never been fulfilled.

For centuries schools have aimed at goals that are impossible to achieve. They still do. That's why it's so common for teachers to feel harassed, children to feel frustrated, and the public to be disappointed. In Chapter 3 we'll see what's involved in learning, why some of our educational goals are unrealistic, and why certain kinds of dispositions are worth aiming at because they are both justifiable and achievable.

Chapter 4 will begin our exploration of how educational goals can be achieved. I'll examine here the nature of the aesthetic and dis-

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cuss the particular educational conditions that are likely to foster aesthetic quality in students' experience. Chapters 5 and 6 will continue our examination of the conditions that foster learning. We'll see how the aesthetic is related to matters as diverse as the pursuit of curiosity, problem-solving, lectures, creativity, and repetitive drill work.

Chapter 6 will also shift our focus from individual experience to social concerns. We'll see that when high-quality experience is achieved in a social setting, it can advance the legitimate goals of socialization as well as education. We'll also see why schools cannot avoid socializing their members. Schools do it now, but they don't do it well. Chapter 7 will examine how it can be done better, and it will offer some examples of schools that have successfully offered students both education and a democratic kind of socialization.

Three chapters make up Part III, Educational Realities: Confronting the System and Escaping the System. In these chapters the ideal conditions for learning discussed in Part II are contrasted with actual conditions found in schools. An effort will be made to explain why school conditions persist that are so anaesthetic and so inimical to education. Part III will also indicate the kinds of changes that would make it possible for teachers and children to learn together.

Chapter 8 will show how schools are a part of a vast, interconnected school system that includes schools at all levels and a variety of nonschool agencies like textbook and testing companies. It will be shown how the purpose of this school system is incompatible with education, and why education reform movements, aimed at shining up the school system, are irrelevant to education.

The last two chapters focus on just a few features of the school system that must be changed if any serious efforts to educate the young are to succeed. Chapter 9 will show why the system of standardized, machine-scored testing of students must be abolished. It will also discuss the need for greater autonomy for teachers, and it will propose broad changes in the ways that teachers are educated, trained, placed in their jobs, and organized, so that they can do their work more effectively.

Chapter 10 will show why segregated schools cannot be good schools, whether they are located in ghettos or in wealthy suburbs. It will offer reasons for abolishing segregated schools and segregation within schools by ability and by age. The chapter will conclude by suggesting how the young can be educated through selected work experiences as an alternative to full-time academic study. The implications of this for teachers and for teaching will be discussed, and it

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will be shown how the aesthetic dimension of work can be as effective in fostering learning as activities undertaken in school.

Before we examine education itself, we'll examine in the next chapter the character of the social environment that education requires. If we aim to cultivate reason, judgment, and individuality in our young, we must be aware of the kinds of social conditions that will allow these traits to flourish. These social conditions are democratic ones. Since individuality is prized in a democracy, its public institutions—and most especially its schools—must foster the conditions that will develop and support individuality.

We will not try to define democracy in a logically tight or scientifically rigorous way. Instead, we'll treat it as an ideal, or as a broad mosaic of ideals. Blurred at its conceptual edges and seldom exemplified in our everyday practice, the ideal of democracy can still offer guidance for changes in how we educate the young. As this ideal gets elaborated in the next chapter, we'll see how its practical use stands in sharp contrast to the use of educational "standards" in directing change. This will help us to see the proper, but very different roles of standards and ideals in the conduct of education.

After sorting out the respective roles of standards and ideals, Chapter 2 will show why social ideals are required to give direction to educational practice, and what kinds of social ideals are implicit in the idea of democracy. Then we'll see how democratic social ideals establish the conditions for individual autonomy and freedom. Thus we'll be able to understand how aesthetic quality in the experience of learners—which makes learning possible—is dependent on establishing democratic social conditions.

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