

Rapid change implies our turning increasingly to art as a supplement to language to carry on the search for values. We may think of language as effecting a control function, art a releasing function. We are developing a new sensorium — the process of receiving-organizing perceptions — by way of new media, intensified experimentation in the arts, etc. To nourish this sensorium and to resist a repressive technologism the experience of art must be more deliberately structured into our educational effort.

KENNETH WINETROUT*

Art and Language: The New Sensorium

The year 1945 is currently achieving a certain prominence: that year is said to mark the end of the modern period and the beginning of the post-modern; the end of the industrial and the beginning of the post-industrial; the end of the Christian and the beginning of the post-Christian. We need not, in the context of our present concern, worry about the terms used to indicate that we are at one of those historical watersheds which signal a revolutionary change in the ways and habits of mankind. Nor need we exasperate over whether the year 1945 or the year 1950 would seem to be the more convenient date as the axial year.

The point is that in our post-World War II era we have the experience of profound change in the way we do things, the way we respond to events. We have: the bomb, the computer, television, jet travel, the pill, etc. In short, we live in a technological society. We have: the rise of new nations, the knowledge industry, black power, student rebellion, the triumph of therapy, etc. In short, we live during a time of rapidly shifting social and moral values.

Ours is a day of tremendous obsolescence and of tremendous innovation. We are caught between two worlds — one not yet dead and the other not yet fully born. This much seems self-evident.

In this axial state, this watershed situation, we realize that a search for meaning, the effort to find a niche for oneself or one's group or one's institution, the whole range of identity crises, the fashioning of new life styles — all this and much more is our peculiar burden, our peculiar challenge.

*Professor of Education, American International College, Springfield, Massachusetts.

II

The question I would ask: is language — words — adequate for this heightened search for meaning? Or to put the issue in another way: is the flexibility of language commensurate to the demands of pervasive change?

For a good deal of man's history such questions just would not have been brought to the surface of consciousness. It is only recently that man has been aware of his language. Iris Murdoch:

We can no longer take language for granted as a medium of communication. Its transparency has gone. We are like people who for a long time looked out of a window without noticing the glass — then one day began to notice this too. The beginnings of this new awareness lie far back but it is only within the last century that it has taken the form of a blinding enlightenment or a devouring obsession . . . In every sphere our simple "thingy" view of the world is being altered and often disintegrated at an unprecedented rate; and a crisis in our view of the operation of language is inevitable.¹

Ernst Cassirer holds that man no longer lives "in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe" and as a result man can no longer "confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face."² It was this reason that Cassirer calls man "animal symbolism."

To have this awareness of language, to see the glass in the window, gave men a series of new insights into language, and much of this new knowledge indicated that language might possess certain qualities which would suggest a constraining effect; that language might not be readily adaptable to a time of flux.

Edward Sapir reminded us that from the very start language was not quite up to the variety we find in experience. "The concreteness of experience is infinite, the resources of the richest language are strict limited. It must perforce throw countless concepts under the rubric of certain basic ones."³ We have an infinitude of events and a finitude of language. This gap would vary from time to time; and we may safely assume such a gap would be most extensive at the moment of era change.

The above is but one of several observations Sapir makes which point toward a certain restrictiveness in language. Sapir suggests that language may be not so much a garment as a prepared groove and he describes how this groove came about.

It is almost as though at some period in the past the unconscious mind of the race has made a hasty inventory of experience, committed itself to a premature classification that allowed of no revision, and saddled the inheritors of its language with a science that they no longer quite believed in nor had

¹Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 27-8.

²Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay On Man* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1953), p. 42.

³Edward Sapir, *Language* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 84.

the strength to overthrow. Dogma, rigidly prescribed by tradition, stiffens into formalism. Linguistic categories make up a system of surviving dogma — dogma of the unconscious.⁴

We are forever reworking the premature classifications of the Greek cosmologists. Thale's water has proved rather inadequate for describing the stuff of the universe. Fire, earth, water, and air may be a bit better, but they too fall far short of our classificatory needs. These are facilely discredited examples of premature classifications. The three-layered universe of heaven, earth, and hell has not been dissipated so easily. Male and female may have been premature; comedy and tragedy perhaps; body and mind surely.

Language, once having set forth a premature classification or an unenlightened dogma, resists. To Sapir, it is the most resistant of man's social achievements, it is "the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations."

It is all too obvious, but it needs to be mentioned: we are each born into a language, occasionally two, rarely more than two. The fact is that we inherit our language and we in our wildest retelling of dreams and in the heat of angry oaths do very little to alter that inheritance. I recall Max Black, philosopher from Cornell University, saying that he would be eternally grateful if on his tombstone could be carved the words: this man changed ever so slightly the meaning of the word *reasonable*. Like a huge glacier this anonymous creation of dead generations moves over our earnest efforts.

But in spite of everything, language is man's best show. It is a great medium. It has served us well over the millenia. I have nothing but the highest regard for language, however much I may abuse it. Still one must not allow his love and admiration for language close his eyes to its shortcomings, especially in a transitional period of history.

III

It would be my thesis that in our day we must quite deliberately turn to art as a supplement to language in our search for meaning, for the creation of new values, to achieve an emotional homeostasis with our changing reality. Now there is nothing even mildly novel about this suggestion. Mankind has always done this. Men have been whistling and humming for many many years. Men have been carving sticks and stones. Men have been spreading colors about on themselves, their houses, and their temples. They have prized ornaments on their women and their weapons.

What would be novel would be the methodical effort in education to see art as this supplement or complement. What might be novel is the careful explication of the inadequacies and restrictions of language and

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 100.

the careful explication of the qualities in art which might serve as compensations for these shortcomings. These sentences may hint at a hierarchy with art playing second fiddle to language. I mean no hierarchial order of more or less, of what belongs to the first order. However, at this stage, it would not only be heresy but chaos if we suddenly gave art equal time in the total education of men.

IV

At the start we ought to establish that art too has been "boxed in." It too has suffered from premature classifications and dogmas. It is true that art owes much to the Greeks. However, that poetic philosopher Plato put a hex on art which has endured to our own day and may extend unto the day of our children and grandchildren.

Plato admired universality, representationalism, and mathematics. For mathematics read order; Plato loved order. Plato had those three beds: the real and universal one existed in the mind of God; a lesser bed which was made by the carpenter; and a third-rated bed created by the painter. To this Greek philosopher, a painter committed a lie when he painted "a portrait not having a shadow of a likeness to the original." Plato made music an adjunct of mathematics to instil order in the soul and he was ready to send all poets into exile because they might disturb the smooth running of the state. The universal, the representational, the orderly — these are what Plato wanted of the artist. Aristotle's theory of forms seems to further underwrite this bias for the universal.

At an early day art was constrained by philosophy. Next it experienced restraint as it came into the service of church and morality.

After the church patronage, we find art in the service of the rich, from Renaissance prince to robber baron to Hollywood star.

Plato's approach to art is primarily conceptual. It has remained for later philosophers to enlarge the approach to art and to postulate goals other than those of universality, representationalism, and order. Cassirer:

Art, on the other hand, teaches us to visualize, not merely to conceptualize or utilize, things. Art gives us a richer, more vivid and colorful image of reality, and a more profound insight into its formal structure. It is characteristic of the nature of man that he is not limited to one specific and single approach to reality but can choose his point of view and so pass from one aspect of things to another.⁵

Also from Cassirer: "Language and science are abbreviations of reality; art is an intensification of reality."⁷

More than Cassirer, it is Santayana who seems determined to free man from art concepts handed down from Plato. His position is plainly con-

⁵Cassirer, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-7.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁷George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), p. 11.

trary to Plato's on a number of scores. For one thing, he breaks away from the philosophical-intellectual bias of the Greek. "To feel beauty is a better thing than to understand how we come to feel it . . . Reflection is indeed a part of life, but the last part."⁷

Where Plato stressed universality and objectivity, Santayana stresses the subjective and individual.

Man has a prejudice against himself: anything which is product of his mind seems to him to be unreal or comparatively insignificant. We are satisfied only when we fancy ourselves surrounded by objects and laws independent of our nature. The ancients long speculated about the constitution of the universe before they become aware of the mind which is the instrument of all speculation . . . Things are interesting because we care about them, and important because we need them. Had our perceptions no connection with our pleasures, we should soon close our eyes on this world; . . . Yet so strong is the popular sense of the unworthiness and insignificance of things purely emotional, that those who have taken moral problems at heart and felt their dignity have often been led into attempts to discover some external right and beauty of which our moral and aesthetic feelings should be perceptions . . . These philosophers seem to feel that unless moral and aesthetic judgments are expressions of objective truth, and not merely expressions of human nature, they stand condemned of hopeless triviality. A judgment is not trivial, however, because it rests on human feelings; on the contrary, triviality consists in abstraction from human interests.⁸

Santayana saw no reason in insisting that what is beautiful to one man ought to be beautiful to another. We do not determine the merit of a work of art on the basis that all men admire it, but rather on the basis of the satisfaction it gives to the person who has the highest appreciation of it.

To Santayana, nothing is "objectively impressive." "All things are not equally beautiful because the subjective bias that discriminates between them is the cause of their being beautiful at all."⁹

The following passage displays clearly how far Santayana has moved from the Platonic view of things.

An absolute perfection, independent of human nature and its variations, may interest the metaphysician; but the artist and the man will be satisfied with a perfection that is inseparable from the consciousness of mankind, since it is at once the natural vision of the imagination, and the rational goal of the will.¹⁰

Cassirer and Santayana speak out loudly against the domination of art by certain Platonic dogmas. It remains for Nietzsche — as one might well expect — to free art from the dogmas of church and morality. "Art raises its head where creeds relax."¹¹ A Nietzsche editor observes: "Nietzsche was among the first to acknowledge art as a substitute religion for Post-Christian Western man."¹² Once more from Nietzsche:

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 266.

¹¹Geoffrey Clive, editor, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: The New American Library, 1965), p. 516.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. XXIX.

"The struggle against a purpose in art is always a struggle against the moral tendency in art, against its subordination to morality.¹³ With god dead, the artist is free. Santayana was mindful of this same problem: "Moral values are generally negative, and always remote. Morality has to do with the avoidance of evil and pursuit of the good: aesthetics only with enjoyment."¹⁴

The philosopher has replied to the philosopher: universality, objectivity, representationalism, and order are not unchallenged goals in art. We have the individual, the subjective, the personal. Art has to do with enjoyment and not morality. It is surely no longer at the mercy of the patronage of the church nor of the rich. Art has broken out of a box it has been in for a long time.

V

In our time no single philosophy of art would be adequate to either the experience of the artist or of the observer. We have come that long road from Plato's single bed in the mind of God to William James's remark of what is so sacred about one. With Nietzsche we can rejoice: "The more emotions we allow to speak in a given matter, the more different eyes we can put on in order to view a given spectacle, the more complete will be our conception of it, the greater our objectivity."¹⁵

Pluralism may be seen as a form of enrichment, not as an impoverishment.

One may gain a sense of freedom by escaping chains forged over centuries by tradition and institutions. Another way to gain this sense is to be given new roles, new assignments. Our contemporary artist would seem to have enjoyed both of these avenues to freedom. We have noted in shameful brevity how he has been unencumbered of philosophical and religious dogmas. A number of mid-century critics have proposed a role-proliferation for the artist. In extreme brevity, I should like to examine five such critics: Camus, Marcuse, Rieff, McLuhan, and Sontag. That others come to mind readily to the reader only serves to document the case of the opening up which is the artist's experience today.

Over the years we have gotten in the habit of thinking that the artist resides in an ivory tower. He lives above and away from the masses of men. Camus will have none of this ivory stuff: "the era of the chair-bound artist is over."¹⁶ He should stand "in the midst of all"; he should "open the prisons and give a voice to the sorrows and the joys of all."¹⁷ The artist, then, has left his ivory tower and stands squarely in the marketplace where he speaks for no special group but for all. We may

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 542.

¹⁴Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁵Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (Garden City: Anchor City: Anchor Books, 1956), p. 255.

¹⁶Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Vintage Book, 1959), p. 151.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

think of this as the democratization and the politicalization of the artist. He speaks for all and he speaks against political oppression. If we accept Camus, aesthetic isolationism is dead.

From Albert Camus to Marshall McLuhan is quite a hop but scarcely an illogical one in our present context. Bertrand Russell holds that it has always been "correct to praise Plato, but not to understand him." In the case of our Canadian friend, one is tempted to say: it has become correct to damn him so wholly that we cannot understand him in parts. The nonsense in McLuhan (and there is much of it) should not encourage us to dismiss summarily the sense in McLuhan, and there is much of this too. McLuhan's comments on the role of the artist, it seems to me, make a lot of good sense.

Technological changes are forever upsetting us and sending us into cultural shock, future shock. McLuhan would have the artist anticipate these changes and then assist in avoiding the consequences of what he calls technological trauma.

"The artist picks up the message of cultural and technological challenge decades before its transforming impact occurs. He, then, builds models or Noah's arks for facing the danger that is at hand."¹⁸

McLuhan has been accused of being an apologist for technology, one who would make technology "at least tolerable as possible."

McLuhan's antics permit such an interpretation, but we need not allow this to be our full interpretation. McLuhan is asking that the artist as a sensitive individual anticipate the consequence of technology and by this very anticipation moderate the trauma. The artist is no mere accessory to technology: "To prevent undue wreckage in society, the artist tends to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society."¹⁹

McLuhan is viewed as an apologist for technology, whereas Herbert Marcuse is seen as its enemy. Both views would appear to be oversimplifications. Marcuse, for example, asks that art "define yet unrealized possibilities of technology" and then work to bring about a scientific-technological transformation of the world. To accomplish this, art does not become "the handmaiden of the established apparatus" and thus gloss over the ugliness and misery inherent in the establishment.²⁰ Indeed, the role of the artist is to cleanse the earth of "the very material garbage produced by the spirit of capitalism."²¹

In so cleansing the earth of capitalistic garbage, the artist would bring about a new "aesthetic ethos," a "new sensorium," a "revolution in perception." "Today's rebels want to see, hear, feel new things in a new

¹⁸Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 65.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 239.

²¹Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay On Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 28.

way."²² To Marcuse, then, art would rid us of capitalistic garbage and prepare us by developing a new sensorium for the reality which awaits us in a post-capitalistic, post-establishment world.

Susan Sontag sees art's role not merely as radically different from the roles assigned it by Platonic and church dogmas, but as significantly different from the roles given it in a recent past. Art is new. It is rooted "in our experiences, experiences which are new in the history of humanity."²³ "Art today is a new kind of instrument, an instrument for modifying consciousness and organizing new modes of sensibility. And the means for practicing art have been radically extended."²⁴

Art is a response to contemporary newness and the artist is using new instruments based on a high degree of specialization in areas which may or may not be what we have conventionally called the arts. It is not a criticism of life, as Arnold has said, but rather an "extension of life." "The point is that there are new standards, new standards of beauty and style and taste. The new sensibility is defiantly pluralistic."²⁵

Art is new: new roles, new instruments, all rooted in today. Art is this extension of life, and its pluralism is a defiance of the past.

The few comments I want to abstract from Philip Rieff's *THE TRIUMPH OF THE THERAPEUTIC* are not in the same pattern used with the four previous writers. Rieff discusses culture in the large anthropological manner. It seems to me that his remarks on culture are relevant to our discussion of the role of art in modern society.

Every culture has two main functions: (1) to organize the moral demands men make upon themselves into a system of symbols that make men intelligible and trustworthy to each other, thus rendering also the world intelligible and trustworthy; (2) to organize the expressive remissions by which men release themselves, in some degree, from the strain of conforming to the controlling symbolic, internalized variant readings of culture that constitute individual character.²⁶

In short, culture does two things: controls and releases. To Rieff, these releasing devices are largely the province of psychotherapy. In fact, Rieff goes so far as to see culture in the large sense as a therapy response to the automaticity of our productive system. Culture has a protective function. Rieff views our cultural revolution as the first one which has as its sole purpose that of creating a new richness of living. He goes further: "What culture has ever tempted to see to it that no ego is hurt? Perhaps the elimination of the tragic sense . . . is no tragedy." Civilization could thus become the expression of "human contents rather than the consolatory control of discontents."²⁷

²²*Ibid.*, p. 37.

²³Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 296.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 297.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 304.

²⁶Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 66.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 27.

Within the Rieff frame of reference, we could, perhaps without abusing his thesis, consider language as an important instrument in the controlling phase of culture and art as a primary instrument in the releasing phase. Then, by extension, we could think of the artist as therapist who would work toward the elimination of the tragic, and that this would be no tragedy. Art would, in this context, become a facilitating agency for what Tom Wolfe calls the "happiness explosion." Thus art assumes a therapeutic role which helps to purge man of his unhappiness and his hangups. It tries to create an environment in which tragedy is minimal, even non-existent. Obviously, Christian sinfulness has no place in this therapeutic world.

With Camus, art leaves the ivory tower for the marketplace where it speaks for all to all. With McLuhan, art anticipates change to soften technological trauma. With Marcuse, art develops a new sensorium which eliminates capitalistic garbage and prepares us for the new world of the post-capitalistic era. With Sontag, art is new with new instruments and is an extension of living. With Rieff, if we may interject generously into his thesis, art constitutes one dimension of the releasing function of culture and may become a therapy along with psychotherapy for eliminating the tragic.

We could readily add to our five approaches, and in all probability such an addition would only serve to document the fundamental pluralism inherent in the art of our day and also indicate how far art has moved away from the constraints of Plato and religion.

VI

Thus far we have been dealing with commentaries on art. When we turn to art productions, objects, the concrete seeing, hearing, feeling things, we enter a realm which makes our wildest theorizing and philosophizing about art seem tame kindergarten stuff. We find flowers and music everywhere. Festivals which attract 300,000 and maybe more. John Cage giving a concert of silence. The Beatles and other groups running through styles the way a gambler runs through a roll of bills at Las Vegas. The living theater with audience participation. *Hair* and *Oh, Calcutta* exploiting nudity and sex play in public. An international fair turned into a cinema triumph, namely, Expo 67 in Montreal. Happenings deliberately unstructured to escalate the statistical probability of novelty. Colors and sounds amplified and mixed electronically. Multi-media invasions of the psyche. Drug induced extensions of the senses. Art not only has many faces; it has many fingers, toes, and now genitalia. As John McHale has said: art has long since gone off the gold standard; and may I add, it has gone off just about every other standard as well.

It's open season. We experiment with our dress, our sounds, our theaters, our colors, our shapes, our lives, our pornographies, our religious

liturgies. Parents, ministers, policemen, and chief justices are all in a dither. We have escaped Plato and the church; we have assigned and encouraged many new roles to that defiantly pluralistic art. Hill-billy and electronics have merged; and likewise primitive African and sophisticated Western. We hyphenate and electronize ourselves into innovation and conjoined obsolescence. We laugh-in and drug-out psychedelically. We escape the confines of the old only to exploit the old. We welcome the new only to advance to new newness.

The result is a new sensorium: the emotional-intellectual-sensing process by which we take in perceptions and organize these perceptions. Ong's definition is somewhat briefer: "the entire sensory apparatus as an operational complex."²⁸ Sontag uses "the new sensibility" as rather equivalent in meaning. We may safely assume that Marcuse's "a revolution in perception" is the equivalent of our "the new sensorium."

We owe much of our awareness that a new sensorium is in the making to two persons: Harold A. Innis and Marshall McLuhan, both Canadians. A key, if somewhat awkward, sentence from Innis goes:

. . . the use of a medium of communication over a long period will to some extent determine the character of knowledge to be communicated and suggest that its pervasive influence will eventually create a civilization in which life and flexibility will become exceedingly difficult to maintain and that the advantages of a new medium will become such as to lead to the emergence of a new civilization.²⁹

What we have seen in recent decades is the emergence of a new medium of communication, the electronic: television, radio, tape recorder, data-processing, etc. Television has come on faster and more universally than virtually any innovation ever to hit mankind.

We would be in error to assume that the advent of electronic communication is alone responsible for our new sensorium. It may be the primary factor, but our view of change encompasses much more.

This new sensorium is the product of:

- The electronic bombardment of our senses
- The full gamut of technological change
- The decay of Platonic guidelines
- The desacralization of life (secularization)
- The urbanization process with mobility and crowdedness
- The new internationalism (jet travel and satellite transmission)
- The unrestrained experimentation in the arts
- The universalization of education
- ETC.

²⁸Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 6.

²⁹Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), p. 34.

Ong: "the sensorium is reorganized and man's relationship to the physical world around him, to his fellow man, to his own thought, and to himself changes."³⁰

It is not sufficient to know how this new sensorium has come into being; we need further and more importantly to know how it is changing. Here McLuhan seems our most helpful resource with Sontag's essay on the new sensibility a fine supplemental statement.

An incomplete inventory of sensorium change follows:

1. We have shifted from a print-literary era to an electronic era in communication. The language-print near-monopoly is gone. Sontag: "A new non-literary culture exists today, of whose very existence, not to mention significance, most literary intellectuals are entirely unaware. This new establishment includes certain painters, sculptors, architects, social planners, film-makers, TV technicians, neurologists, musicians, electronic engineers, dancers, philosophers, and sociologists."³¹ According to Sontag, the literary men are on the defensive.

2. Recent years have brought with them vastly more reality-and-art-impingements on the senses. A veritable bombardment each day from the sciences, from Madison Avenue, from the sports world, the entertainment world. More holes, as it were, are being punched into us.

3. Our receptive apparatus is being enlarged and perhaps refined. We look through electronic microscopes and listen through electronic amplifiers: new sights and new sounds. We have psyche probes and Mars probes. There is more reality to take in and we take in more of that reality. It is all part of McLuhan's global embrace.

4. Acceleration: a message flashed back from Mars is somehow different from one brought by boat from Samoa. An answer fed back in miniseconds by a computer is not the same answer we would have by the process of paper-and-pencil arithmetic. McLuhan: "When all kinds of information flowed slowly into society, educational irrelevance could be corrected by self-education and individual brilliance. That won't work today."³²

5. All of this affects changes in what McLuhan calls the "sensory threshold." Youngsters growing up in the 60s seem to be able to study with more noise about them. They like to read with the radio on and on loud. The Beatles and the hundreds of groups which have followed them have so assaulted the ear that these young people have a receptiveness (or tolerance) for sounds which just did not exist some few years ago. The spectrum of sounds has been enlarged. The same can be said for shapes in sculpture and colors in paintings.

³⁰Ong, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

³¹Sontag, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-9.

³²Marshall McLuhan, *Verbi Vocal-Visual Explorations* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), n.p.

6. The expression “sensory ratios” also comes from McLuhan. If we have this shift from print to sound, then the ear takes on a relative importance which once the eye enjoyed. When this happens, men change; and we pay attention to different aspects of reality. We are now able to see some things clearly while other things once perceived with ease come through to us at best with a certain opacity. “The fall in the level of literary goes hand in hand with a great increase in range of oral verbalization. Literacy is the social acceptance of the monopoly of one mode of perception.”³³

7. With Sontag, this new sensorium is rooted “in our experience.” There is something wholly contemporaneous about it. The past which it encompasses is peculiarly the past of the present.

This effort at describing the sensorium implies no desire to downgrade the literary dimension of our culture. It is intended to be a description not a judgment, while granting that it is difficult to bring off a clear delineation of these two.

VII

Once we have some notion of this new sensorium, once we have some notion of the great flux in our culture, it would seem that we are under a firm and insistent obligation to acculturate with a different emphasis from our customary emphasis. Having our being in a world of rapid and insinuating change and in a world where sensory impingements are so numerous and varied, it would seem that we must incorporate art in a dramatically heightened way into the acculturation process. We have some reason to believe that art is more responsive to change than language. We have some reason to believe it can make an adaptative or an interpretative reaction in a shorter time. This would be one dimension of our problem.

Further and more critically, we need to understand and enjoy the new sensorium. To be a contemporary, to be a responsive — not just a reactive — person, one needs to be a participant in this culture which we can get at only by a much more intense and diverse aesthetic experience than has been the case in the past. In addition to a kind of ethos sensory ratio, there would be sensory ratios of a very personal nature. The sensory drum beats will not be the same for each and every person. The inclusion of art ought to increase the choice one wants to make for his sensory contact. He has more styles to manage his life.

Toynbee is fond of quoting one Quintus Aurelius Symmachus: “The heart of so great a mystery cannot ever be reached by following one road only.” It seems that art gives us many new roads. We throw more troops into the battle. We have more eyes.

³³*Ibid.*, n.p.

But further, to achieve meaning, to preserve one's own being in our day, we can turn to the arts. Thus we may resist a bureaucratic establishment, a repressive technological society. Thus we may do that which is peculiarly our own; thus we may nourish our new sensorium.

VIII

It would seem inappropriate in an educational journal to conclude an essay such as this without an effort at suggesting some fairly concrete implications for teachers. If one accepts that we are in the process of developing a new sensorium, if indeed we need something more than language as exposition, then certain educational changes are in order.

1. Those teachers, especially English teachers, who are responsible for communication skills instruction, need a much more intimate orientation in the various arts than is now the case.

2. When it is possible, students should have first hand contact with artists in their studios, the painter, the television cameraman, the musician, etc.

3. Teachers should experiment with multimedia methodologies, not in a perfunctory or merely tricky technological sense, but in an esthetic exploratory manner which would give the student a sensitivity to the various facets of his sensorium.

4. A considered recognition of the affective dimension of education is a simple necessity. The existentialist philosopher has long held that the rational dimension, the cognitive element, is not the whole of education. The emotions are no longer to be denigrated or neglected.

5. Students must be given a new and comprehensive introduction to contemporary arts. The Beatles and those who followed at Woodstock and elsewhere gave clear evidence of the importance of music in the lives of the young. One gathers that very few schools have done anything about what the "new sounds" mean to the sensual perceptions of young persons.

6. One may grant with Santayana that it is better to feel beauty than to understand it, but withal this does not preclude an intellectual encounter with such writers as McLuhan, Sontag, *et al.* Students should have an awareness that their sensorium is in the process of change. It is a legitimate enterprise to elaborate the steps whereby this or that nation became involved in this or that war. Surely it is equally legitimate to know the steps whereby mass media and esthetic experimentation have altered our contact with reality and altered our capacity to make this contact.

7. In the 1970s we have some reason to believe that the young are turning away from a compulsive consumerism and space-inspired concern for science, and that in so doing they are turning towards the arts. We

also observe in the 1970s some disposition on the part of educational institutions to eliminate or curtail fine arts departments. As a result we could come up with the esthetic gap. In our day, this could be tragic: for personal meaningfulness and for effective reality contact at the societal level our Parthenon must make generous provision for all the arts.

If one may end on a prophetic note: as we close out the 20th century and enter the 21st century, art has a high probability of being a major survival technique for man; and the educational system which ignores this probability weakens its own potential for survival.