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Dilemma: The Art Teacher as a Liberal Educator

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the dilemma facing the art teacher as a liberal educator. The author first reviews the evolution of liberal education from ancient times, through the Renaissance to modern times and discusses, through an extensive bibliography, ancient and modern theories which have impacted on the concept of "liberalism," examining notions such as tolerance, individualism and autonomy which constitute the pillars of liberalism. The author discusses the contributions of philosophers and sociologists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, Isaiah Berlin, and Will Kymlicka and then examines the two main approaches to liberalism: philosophical liberalism and political liberalism. The different emphases placed by these two approaches, on the individual and the group respectively, form the basis of the dilemma which faces the art teacher as a liberal educator. In order to understand the dilemma, the author draws a parallel between the two approaches and the role of the traditional art studio master and art educator. The goals of the studio master, who is devoted to the development of the individual, accord with philosophical liberalism, while those of the art educator, who is obliged to adhere to the demands of a school system, accord with political liberalism, which stresses equality for all. The ideal, says the author, resides in an amalgam of the two approaches and is symbolized in the term "artist-teacher" but she asks whether it is possible to truly merge the two approaches, at the same level, in the teaching process.

KEYWORDS

Tolerance, Individualism, Autonomy, Freedom of the Individual, Liberal Education, Political Liberalism, Philosophical Liberalism, Curriculum, Art Educator

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