

In the phrase “that the education of a people cannot be restricted just in the promotion of his enlightenment, but has also to be extended to his cultivation” Mendelsohn argues that the teaching of the values of the enlightenment must not only be said but should be coupled with man’s general cultivation. Specifically, “that the education of a people” is a clear mention of the public education system that has at its roots the education not only of the rich but the poor strata of society that represent the people. Also, by his usage of the terms enlightenment and cultivation he makes a clear distinction between the <<strict>> logic-centered values of the former (liberalism, democracy, science) with the latter’s cultivation of the spirit (art, philosophy, aesthetics). In order to understand the usage and the need to express such an opinion, we must first do a historical analysis of the philosopher’s time and if his teachings are still relevant today.

Mendelsohn and Schiller lived in the age of revolutions (18-19 century A.D). Due to the barbarity of the actions of the revolutionaries against the established order, particularly in the French Revolution, many contemporary men were horrified. The ideas that the enlightenment preached were routinely ignored. The basic human rights of the nobles and the clergy were non-existent as the revolutionaries told the French people that these classes were the roots of their problems. Revolutionary tribunals, which were nothing more than a parody of justice, guillotined the perceived enemies of the revolution but in truth were used for the elimination of political enemies. The right for a fair trial was not even given to the central members of the revolutionary struggle, such as Danton. The right of private property was stepped upon by the nationalization of the estates of the church and the aristocracy. Democracy and liberal government that so many enlightenment thinkers imagined was replaced with Robespierre’s reign of terror which was based on the repression of the citizens, which was objectively even worse than the tyranny of the monarchy. In the end, with the introduction of Napoleon the great to the “republic’s” government and its eventual transformation to the French Empire, European republicanism was, for the time being, a failed experiment.

The two philosophers tried to determine the causes of such a degeneration of republican values. They came to the same conclusion, in order for man to reach his full potential and to create a just society he needs to use the logical basis of enlightenment thinking with the cultivation of his sentiments. In particular, Schiller argued that, by the usage of art, man can create an equilibrium between his feelings and his logic. This can lead him to determine between right or wrong making him ethical. That idea of the need for man to have a complete education came from one of the most important ideas of the Renaissance, <<Homo Universalis>>, the holistic man. Only through this process can man live and

propagate a just society without the need of enforcement by the organs of the state. Schiller and Mendelsohn believed that this process had not been used by the revolutionaries to educate the people in order to establish their ideal liberal society but the peoples feelings of revenge had been wrongfully used in order to accrue political power for themselves. Lastly, it can be argued that their ideas were influenced from Aristotle as he believed that there is a need for an balance in all things such as between logic and ethics and the revolutionaries failed to follow it because they indulged in excess violence for the establishment of their values, making them unethical.

In our contemporary time this issue is still highly relevant. In school, while the logical values of democracy, liberalism and tolerance are still being taught, the cultivation of the feelings of student is still lacking leading to many negative consequences. In particular, the teaching of music, art, poetry, literature and other artistic issues have been placed behind the classes of math, physics and chemistry. This completely logic-centered education leaves little room for the free expression of the feelings of the students. This has its downsides on our everyday life. Everytime someone hears of the damages to public and private property, theft, hooliganism and other criminal activities committed by adolescents, they reason for it can be traced back to their need to express their feelings for the outside world. Something that only artistic classes can cultivate in a non violent way. These violent tentences can also be countered by graffiti places that teenagers can used to create true pieces of art with the permission of the local government, something that has already been done in a number of western countries. This has led to the reduction of adolescent crime in these places proving that Schillers and Mendelsohn views were right. In addition, students that spent more time with an artistic hobby have been proven to have in general higher grades than those that spend less. It can also be successfully argued through scientific studies that the people how have on some point some artistic education have better mental health than those who have not.

It ought to be said that a lot of modern revolution have lost their moral compass due to this problem. The October Revolution, while virtuous in its advancement of the rights of the downtrodden proletariat, was in the end turned into the antidemocratic, bureaucratic and repressive state of the Soviet union betraying its original socialist values as was argued by Trotsky. Meanwhile, the erosion of our modern democratic values due to the rise of far-right parties has been achieved due to the lack of empathy that most citizens have to minorities, something that can be traced back to our perceived notion of the superiority of logic.

All in all, the ideas and problems that Schiller and Mendelsohn have propagated about are still more relevant than ever. Despite this, our politicians have done nothing to fix our erroneous logic-centered educational system. All the downsides of this false policy have been proven time and time again to lead on most of the problems our youth faces today. Youth crime, hooliganism, theft, bullying, rioting and many others continue to exist and be exarcebated. The answer to these problems have thankfully been answered by these philosophers as has already been established. By the introduction of more artistic classes and the need to balance between our logic and our feelings we can hopefully create a more peaceful and democratic populace that craves balance in all things, as Aristotle would have wanted, while successfully defending the continuation of our democratic tradition that Schiller and Mendelsohn supported.