

# Great and Glorious

or the Modest Newsletter Outstretched

## **Mortimer Adler's *Art, the Arts, and the Great Ideas.***

*Book Review by Eric White*

In this little book, Adler attempts to answer the question of how the fine arts work into the Great Ideas discussion. In a word, or two, they don't. His argument begins by defining the Great Ideas. He even includes a chapter (about half of the book) discussing the history of the two editions of the Great Books. If you are familiar with the Great Books, you probably have leafed through the Syntopicon, volumes 2 & 3 of the set. The Syntopicon is the list of the Great Ideas of Western thought. Once he has established the Great Ideas, and his definition of the arts, it is a clear conclusion that, in his opinion, the two will not mix. All of which leads me to ask the question, "What is Adler's view of the fine arts?"

Adler distinguishes between artisanship and artistry. The former is the work of the hands which creates an object to be used, such as a chair. The latter is the production of that which is beheld for its own aesthetic sake. The fine arts are again broken down into two classifications: literary and non-literary. Literary arts include imaginative literature, opera, or even a painting which the painter titled. Words themselves are in some way attached to, or included with the work of art. Non-literary art is sculptures, non-programmatic musical scores, or untitled paintings. Adler summarizes his distinction, "When works of imaginative literature move us emotionally, they do so through the intellect" (139). The non-literary arts merely evoke immediate emotional response. I have included a lengthy quote in order to keep the context:

Since such great works of fine art have intrinsic aesthetic excellence, we enjoy them for their own sake—for their beauty, which is the pleasure we enjoy in apprehending them—the subjective aspect of beauty—beauty in the eye of the beholder—it will differ from person to person.

It may not even be experienced by some individuals, while occurring to a high degree for others. When it happens, that aesthetic pleasure is of great human importance in being a higher pleasure than the lower and more fleshly pleasures. It is right that individuals seek such aesthetic pleasure.

Adler, in my opinion, does not understand the meaning or purpose of what he calls the fine arts. First, Adler's distinction between artisanship and artistry is too simplistic. Second, his understanding of art is characterized by immaturity. Third, and subordinate to the second, art does, in once sense, contribute to the great conversation. Fourth, when Adler does place arts into his educational schema, he is not consistent with his own use of educational theory, the trivium. I will deal with each of these in order.

Artisanship and Artistry: I agree with Adler that artisanship is a work of the hands for a useful purpose. But, that description does not necessarily exclude the other. Somewhere it has been said that at one time, men crafted as an act of worship. Artisanship, the manner in which something is crafted, does communicate on one level, though less specific than the fine arts. Its communication is more passive—not a painting hanging on a wall, but like the paint on the wall (or the very wall itself). Here is an example I recently discovered. Under communism in Eastern countries, the government tore down single dwelling homes and replaced them with apartment complexes—street after street of the same. It was the communists' view of the world that led them to create such dwellings. They hoped it would create a certain view of the world in the populace.

Artisanship itself is part of Artistry and cannot be separated from it. It must be done well, or it is only a good attempt. This weakness in Adler's view will create problems for him later in

his thinking. It is possible to have an ugly painting; in other words, someone may attempt to paint a sunset he hopes someone will find beautiful, but fail miserably. In order to paint a proper sunset, he must utilize craftsmanship, technique, color, etc. Elephants are not craftsmen. By Adler's definition, they might produce art, but it is bad art, done poorly.

Art: Although another entire essay should be devoted to this point, let it suffice to say that I disagree with Adler's definition of artistry. Adler, as long as no words are involved, practically, lets art go on its own. In other words, as long as someone considers a work of art something worth beholding, it is art. I raise two objections. First, Adler entangles himself in a postmodern rope. If artistry is only art when one beholds it as such, then if, at any time, no one is beholding it, is it still art? Second, good art is not an end in itself; it does not merely evoke emotional responses. Art is a means to an end which is both intellectual and affective. It is intellectual because a good work of art requires contemplation and thought, asking the question, "what is the artist communicating?" If there is nothing to think about, the art is bad. Also, good art leads one into the world of the artist. It is a portal, not a picture; it is an icon, not an object of worship.

The Great Conversation: Adler does not believe that art communicates on the intellectual level unless it includes words. Since it does not communicate, it cannot contribute to a conversation, nor The Conversation; it cannot argue, debate, or criticize another's argument. Although I agree with Adler that it is limited in its contribution to The Conversation, I disagree that its only place is on the wall during a conversation. Because art is both intellectual and historical, it can and does enter into The Conversation, especially regarding religion and philosophy. No one can study a painting by Bosch, for example, St. John on the Isle of Patmos, and not notice the religious/political criticisms he is making.

Adler's Trivium: Adler is inconsistent in his approach to including the arts in the trivium. In his *Paideia Proposal*, he has a three column chart denoting the three phases of the trivium. He originally put the performance of fine arts under Ideas and Issues, the third column. After due criticism that performance is not the same as the discussion of ideas, he moved performance (rightly so) to the second column, Development of Skills. In the third column, he placed the literary arts, but he left the first column, Acquisition of Knowledge, blank. On one hand, I have already discussed the reason all of the fine arts should be allowed in the third column. I believe, however, that he could add fine arts to the first column (sometimes called the grammar stage), because they all include a basic vocabulary and history. Music theory is a perfect example.

In conclusion, my expectations were spoiled in reading this book. I agree much with Adler's view of classical education; I own the Great Books and about half of the Junior Great Books; I am indebted to Adler's work in the Syntopicon. Yet, when it comes to arts and aesthetics, we must look elsewhere for help.

### **Medicine, Ministry, Arachnids, and AWANA: Part III**

*By Todd Mitchell*

**From Part II:** Many dear Christian brothers and sisters are involved in AWANA. I believe that their involvement is motivated by sincere love for God and for His people. They toil in a labor of love as they execute their duties as AWANA workers, and for that they deserve profound respect. Their tireless devotion is an example and a rebuke to me. I love them and frankly recoil at the prospect of offending them. But it is precisely my deep respect for them which gives me hope – hope that they might listen and dream of A Better Way. I will examine one and only one aspect of AWANA: the use of extrinsic motivation to train “the church leaders of tomorrow.”

AWANA uses rewards to motivate children to memorize Bible verses, to invite friends to church, and even to pray. After all, is it not biblical to receive a reward for performing well in the Lord's service? But then, if all rewards are biblical, to what did Jesus object in Mathew 6? Before immersing children in a sea of rewards – before the church systematically conditions their behavior with extrinsic motivation – we had better understand what Jesus meant.

As discussed in Part II, certain extrinsic rewards are indeed biblical. They have to be, or the teaching of Jesus in Mat 6 makes no sense. In Mat 6 Jesus contrasts *meaningful* rewards with *meaningless* rewards. He begins his lesson in v. 1 with the admonition, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." He illustrates this with three examples of this mistake committed by "the hypocrites," and in each case pronounces, "I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (vv. 2, 5, 16) Jesus contrasts this meaningless reward with a meaningful reward, promising, "your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (vv. 4, 6, 18)

If Jesus is simply teaching the most efficient way to earn meaningful rewards, then this teaching is nothing more than a helpful tip to avoid time-wasting activities. But by pointing to "the hypocrites" Jesus deliberately heaps scorn on those who pursue meaningless rewards. A deeper message is clearly implied, especially in light of what follows in vv. 22-24. His reference to the darkened eye's gloom and the traitorous servant's treachery are not random thoughts – they fit the lesson well. Doing "acts of righteousness" for any reason other than the *right* reason is hypocritical, results in meaningless rewards, and reveals an eye beclouded and a God forsaken.

How shall we teach our children this lesson? Perhaps we should teach it as Jesus taught it – by contrasting *wrong rewards* with *right rewards*. And we must never, ever, ever tempt our children to pursue the wrong ones.

Unfortunately this is precisely what AWANA does with the "jewel" to be worn on the "crown" insignia on the AWANA uniform.<sup>1</sup> The jewel is a statement of achievement for all to see. How does this differ from the practice of the Pharisees (whom he calls "hypocrites" in Mat 15:7) that Jesus condemned in Mat 23:5? There we read, "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long."

Surely we would balk at adults in the congregation wearing rank insignia on their lapels, bearing jewels for praying, bringing visitors, and reciting verses. The parallel with lengthening phylacteries and tassels would be obvious if *adults* began this practice. But if it is perilous for adults to do this, how much more perilous is it for children, who lack the discernment of adults?

At this point two oft-quoted verses must be addressed, because there is widespread belief that children learn in such a fundamentally different way than do adults that none of this really matters. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 13:11, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me," and Peter wrote in 1 Pet 2:2, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." I have heard these verses quoted in support of all manner of "age-appropriate" teaching methods. Even stipulating that the context of these verses supports extraction of an abiding principle of Christian education, in no case could deliberately erroneous teaching be justified. If anything, the latter verse militates against error, for the emphasis is on *purity*. If something is perilous for adults, it is perilous for children.

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<sup>1</sup> From Part II: "The Skipper Handbook offers 'Green Jewel 3' upon certification that the 'clubber' has brought a visitor to Awana, told a Bible story, recited Col 1:3, and prayed for five nights. This synthetic jewel is placed in a crown-shaped device that displays the child's 'rank' upon the uniform." *Skipper Handbook*, (Streamwood, IL: Awana Clubs International, 1990), 44-47.

As far as “AWANA Bucks” go, I have to believe that even the strongest proponents of AWANA have moments of concern about this. No amount of cautious couching of rewards like these can render them safe. We can try to convince ourselves that the long speeches that precede such rewards (“Now, kids, remember, you shouldn't really do this *just* for the AWANA bucks!”) are effective, but the fact remains that these rewards would not be used in the first place if folks did not think they were necessary. Remember what Brenda said, “If we just gave to everyone regardless . . . they would never 'try' to achieve or reach for the prize.”<sup>2</sup> Holding out money to a little child with a “do this, get that” promise is a great way to prove the adage, “Rewards motivate students to get rewards.”<sup>3</sup>

These AWANA bucks are legal tender in the AWANA store. To a little child who lacks funds to buy even a pack of gum in the grocery store, this is real money. How tragic given the intent of AWANA to sow the seed of God's Word in the heart of a child! By sowing it in a way that itself tempts the child with “the deceitfulness of wealth,” we may unwittingly play out the parable of the sower time and again under the guise of “ministry” that *actually cultivates thorny soil*.

These rewards do more than merely tempt children to commit the same hypocrisy that angered Jesus. They demonstrate to the children the lesser worth of All Things Godly. Children know they do not typically learn reading, writing, and arithmetic with a constant stream of jewels and bucks.<sup>4</sup> Yet we expect them to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic anyway, and learn them they do. After all, these things are worth learning for their own sake. But for some reason we do not similarly expect them to learn Scripture or to pray or to bring visitors to church. Those things simply are not as worthwhile. They are not worth learning for their own sake. Of all subjects, they are the most boring, the most tedious, and the least rewarding. “That is why, children, we offer you jewels and AWANA bucks,” is the message children receive.

This is particularly disturbing in light of Pro 8:10-11, “Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.” It is utterly impossible to teach this proverb by offering a jewel or an “AWANA Buck” for learning it. Recitation is possible, yes. But rewarding recitation of this proverb with a fake ruby might just prevent the child from *ever* grasping this verse! If we stay this course, we have only ourselves to blame when we lament the rising tide of the “What's in it for me?” attitude in our churches.<sup>5</sup>

How are parents to raise their children after the manner of Deu 6:7 if their children come to expect jewels and bucks for All Things Godly? If our children are indoctrinated from an early age to put a price on Scripture memorization, prayer, and the like, how will they fare when immersed in it as Deu 6:7 describes, “when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up?” The awkwardness of this question is revealing. If they were accustomed to immersion, they would not need these rewards – yet AWANA insists

<sup>2</sup>AWANA Forum, n.p. [cited 17 Feb 2005]. Online: <http://www2.awana.org/cs/forums/76413/ShowPost.aspx>. This post is from a writer identified as “Brenda.”

<sup>3</sup>Scottie May, “A Look at the Effects of Extrinsic Motivation on the Internalization of Biblical Truth.” *CEJ* 7:1 (Spring 2003): 56.

<sup>4</sup>Some respond to this by comparing jewels and bucks to the commonly accepted academic grading system. If this is perilous, they ask, then isn't it perilous to issue grades (A, B, C, D, F) for schoolwork? The argument breaks down, however, since: 1. grades are not typically “publicized” like jewels, 2. grades are not immediately redeemable for merchandise, like “bucks,” and 3. the question is asked and answered, “If the comparison is legitimate, why does not AWANA use grades instead of jewels?”

<sup>5</sup>James M. Kushiner, “No Lattes in Kazakhstan,” n.p. [cited 26 Jan 2005]. Online: [http://mererecomments.typepad.com/mererecomments/2005/01/ifkazakhstan\\_la.html](http://mererecomments.typepad.com/mererecomments/2005/01/ifkazakhstan_la.html)

the rewards are necessary. And once they are indoctrinated by rewards of this nature, immersion becomes far more difficult.

I faced this myself with my own son. For years I allowed my children to participate in AWANA as my misgivings grew. One evening on our way home from the assembly, I mentioned to my son how helpful it would be if he learned a particular verse. He replied, “What do I get for it?” This was not the first time I had heard this response, despite my efforts to explain just what he *did* get for it, namely, the *right* rewards Jesus extolled in Mat 6. I knew then that if I made the difficult decision to remove my children from AWANA, I would be better able to raise them after the manner of Deu 6:7. I do not claim to be a model of such teaching – I most certainly am not. But several years post-AWANA I can say that I have never since heard, “What do I get for it?” Just the other day my son watched as my wife taped a card on the kitchen cabinet to help herself memorize a verse. He suddenly became excited, and asked me if I wanted to make some similar cards with him to learn some extra verses. I rejoiced at being led by my son! With no promise of jewels or bucks, this eight year-old took the initiative to learn Scripture!

Even public schools are admitting that this movement they embraced for so long has failed, as Crotty admits:

It is only recently, with the abundance of new understandings about the brain and how it functions, that we are beginning to understand that our behaviorist approach to education has actually been working against our brains' natural design for learning. . . . The extrinsic rewards that have been promised and delivered to students over the years have, in actuality, interfered with their learning rather than enhanced it. The mentality of "do this, and you'll get that" has ignored the fact that learning itself is the reward, and has instead resulted in students only doing what they know they will "get something for". We have, sadly, been treating our students in the same way that we treat our pets when teaching them a new trick.<sup>6</sup>

Crotty argues from the basis of secular psychology. How can we, with such overwhelming evidence from Scripture itself, continue to cling to this “behaviorist approach to learning” when even secular psychologists admit the game is up?<sup>7</sup>

If the sun came up tomorrow and AWANA stopped using rewards like rank insignia with jewels and “AWANA Bucks,” one of two things would happen. Either the children's performance would decline or it would not.<sup>8</sup> Either response would support the argument that AWANA should eliminate these rewards. Unaffected performance would at least demonstrate that the rewards are unnecessary, in which case, why risk using them? Declining performance would tend to confirm our fear that the children are pursuing the rewards for the sake of the rewards themselves, in which case, how could we possibly go back to them?

<sup>6</sup>Julie Crotty, “Student Motivation,” n.p. [cited 17 Feb 2005],

<http://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/cia/motivation/motivation.html>. Crotty is a “Consultant for Classroom Instructional Strategies and School Improvement” with Iowa public schools Area Education Agency 7.

<sup>7</sup>Edward L. Deci, Richard Koestner, and Richard M. Ryan, “A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation,” *Psychological Bulletin* 125:6 (1999): 627-668. From the abstract: “A meta-analysis of 128 studies examined the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. As predicted, engagement-contingent, completion-contingent, and performance-contingent rewards significantly undermined free-choice intrinsic motivation . . . as did all rewards, all tangible rewards, and all expected rewards. . . **Tangible rewards tended to be more detrimental for children than college students.** [emphasis added]”

<sup>8</sup>This is deliberately couched in terms comprehensible to those demanding benchmarks of demonstrable, measurable performance. Of course, true progress in the faith that occurs in the heart may have little measurable result in the fledgling stage of the Christian life. Likewise, regress.

Let us raise the bar for our children and watch as they reach higher than we have dared to imagine. Let us have faith in God that he will lead them to reach higher than even they can imagine. Let us simply try doing what the church once did only a few short generations ago.

We have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

## **Music and Hymns**

*By Eric White*

These thoughts are taken from the Bernstein lectures ("The Unanswered Question") as well as a casual conversation with others more musically minded than myself. I set them out before you for serious criticism. I speak here only of the hymn. What I am about to say may not apply to other genres.

I. Definition - Bernstein names three types of musical meaning in his third lecture "Semantics". Two of these meanings are pertinent to this discussion, namely, intrinsic meaning and extrinsic meaning. Intrinsic meaning is the meaning that is contained within music itself. This meaning is formed by the very structure of the composition. As a simple example, note the minor triad of C-Eb-G. We often say that minor chords evoke sorrow, tension, and the like. The reason is intrinsic in the chord itself. When we play C on the piano, we hear E even if it isn't played (called an overtone). So when we play C-Eb together, we hear C-Eb-E. Another example is the diminished 7th chord C-Bb. This chord evokes a notion of suspense or intrigue because intrinsically it is unfulfilled. It requires a resolution.

Extrinsic meaning is the situation when musical notes are designed to evoke a particular extra-musical idea. A prime example is the "Carnival of the Animals" by Saint Seans, or the 1812 Overture, or even the William Tell overture. (If you know the story of William Tell, then you will understand why the music fit the theme of the Lone Ranger.) Thus, we have two types or kinds of musical meaning, that which is inherent within the music (intrinsic meaning) and that which points to a specific, concrete idea outside the music (extrinsic meaning).

II. Conflict - Sometimes, when listening to a well written hymn, I will say to myself, "the music fits the first verse so well, but not the second." But what do I mean by this question? Here indeed is the question. "How do music and text work together at the level of meaning?"

One example of how we change the music to fit the "second" verse is the common arrangement of "Amazing Grace." The third verse, in this case, discusses the weariness and trials of the Christian life-not the joy found in new life, such as the first verse states. So the arrangers and performers often drop to the minor key during the third verse. Then as we approach the uplifting fourth verse about eternity, we raise it back to the major (C) or even modulate (change) to D major. The reason the music is changed, stanza by stanza, is to make the music more expressive, expressing the words of the text.

III. Hymnody - A hymn consists of at least two parts, the written music and the poem. The poem, by its very nature, is a metaphor; a statement that A is (like) B. Two ideas are brought together to teach us a third idea. Words, even when used in poetry, communicate specific ideas. The problem is music cannot communicate at the same level of specificity as words can.

A good example is "A Mighty Fortress is Our God". The title summarizes the metaphor of the poem for us. The music, by its intrinsic meaning, by the very way in which it is constructed, is a fortress, is strong and stable-not because particular notes are meant to convey the extrinsic idea of fortress, or other certain notes a bulwark. We do not need to see Satan in a minor chord, nor the earth in a major chord. Music, classically written, follows certain musical principles. Returning to overtones, music of that time often played on the tonic (the key the

music is written in; in our example it is C) and the dominant (or the 5th note which is the first overtone; in our example, it is G [C-D-E-F-G]). Not only do we find this play, but we also find a play on the octave or the high C. Another reason, of many, that makes the musical composition strong is the extended play on 5ths. The 5th of C is G; the 5th of G is D, then A. There are strings of chord progressions that follow these fifths: [the third measure] A-D-G-(A). [the fifth measure] (A)-D-G-C. Not merely a play on C-G, but the music begins with high C, plays with 3 dominants (G-D-A), and ends on the tonic, middle C.

IV. Resolution - Is the approach to arranging hymns in the "Amazing Grace" example preferable? Should we arrange the music to be more expressive? Should we seek to match words of the text with music, evoking particular images and feelings? Should we match the music to the words of the text or to the metaphor of the text? If we arrange a hymn by consciously adding extrinsic ideas, we may actually be destroying the intrinsic meaning of the music by accident.

Switching the third stanza of "Amazing Grace" to a minor key is a good example of the danger involved. The idea of the poetry again is stated in its title. The poem is exalting God for his grace in salvation, in the Christian life, and even death and the life to come. When searching for music which communicates a similar idea, we probably would not reach for a minor key. So what is the difference if we change one stanza to a minor key? The point of the third stanza is that even in difficult trials, God's Amazing Grace sustains us. If we leave the key in the major, the intrinsic, musical idea continues while we sing of trials. It also leaves our musical framework intact. If we switch the key to the minor, we no longer exalt the God of the Amazing Grace; we muddle low in our trials, singing 'Woe is me.' [This is not to say that we cannot sing songs in minor keys or in anguish. That is not the point of the poetry in "Amazing Grace". (Like in preaching, some would say, "good message, wrong text".)]

V. Conclusion - In hymnody, music and text should work together in this way: the poetry conveys the specific idea of the hymn while the music supports the idea with its own intrinsic meaning.

### **Upcoming Retreat! Anyone Interested?**

*By Deborah Forteza*

Joel is trying to convince us all that this retreat will be exceptional. He is in charge of getting a good speaker, though he continues in his ambivalence about taking on leadership responsibilities. [Joel, get over it and do your job!] We should probably discuss what topic we would like to address, and assign them to different people. The retreat is scheduled for June 3-4, 2005, starting on Friday evening and ending sometime in the evening on Saturday. The location is St. Olaf (though we won't be in the same building as last time), and the cost is \$35 per person. Please get this money to me before or by the next bash, for deposit payment. Checks are fine. *Please let me know if you are not planning to come.*

### **Rejoinder**

*By Joel Zartman*

Joel never has agreed to be in charge and refuses all such charge. I was in charge last time, remember? Moreover, it has never been his belief that this or the previous retreat are, have been, or will be exceptional. The retreat has the potential to become something very interesting, especially if it is not merely relegated to him but rather seized by more than a few hands and given some good effort. I propose one of our topics be the whole worship thing: how to argue it.