
ANDRÉ FORTIER

REFLECTIONS ON A MODE OF ANALYSING ARTISTIC ACTIVITY AND ITS FINANCING

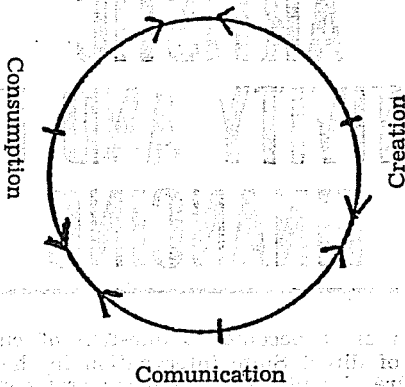
As soon as it becomes a question of cultural policy, of direct State intervention in the field of culture, the planner and technocrat come up against the absolutely fundamental difficulty of reconciling aims of a chiefly qualitative nature and strategy based necessarily on a quantitative assessment of these aims and the means to be used in order to attain them.

It seems to me that this difficulty is nowhere as evident as in the field of art, where the concept of quality is of crucial importance, but where use of quantitative data is required in order to know exactly where one is starting out from and where one is going. It is my intention in this paper to show that this knowledge of data of a quantitative nature is essential for any effective action aimed at improving the actual quality of artistic life. I shall also point out certain roads of research and reflection in connection with this question.

My observations are largely based on a lecture I gave two years ago at York University in Toronto on *A Quantitative Approach to the Qualitative Development of the Arts in Canada*. It is not often that we examine artistic quality from the viewpoint of quantity. It is

indeed difficult to find two terms which would appear to be as contrary and as difficult to reconcile in the eyes of the artist and art lover alike. Believe me that I, too, am sceptical of such a broad cult of quantity and indifference towards quality; like you, no doubt, I am suspicious of those who make a religion out of organization, standardization and the materialist concept of things.

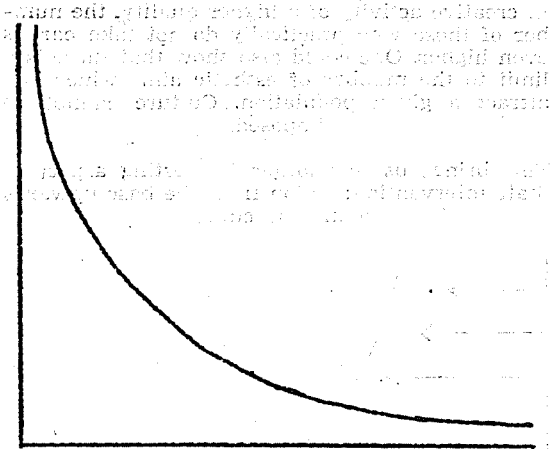
Be that as it may, it seems to me that when considering the nature of artistic activity one quickly perceives that it is composed of three principal elements in constant interaction: creation, communication and consumption. By consumption I mean what is called the public, the audience. We can show this interaction graphically in the following way:



1. Graphic representation showing the interaction of the components of artistic activity.

Artistic activity generates the quality of life for all those participating in one or the other of these three aspects: for those who create; for those who communicate the artistic work and for those who comprise the audience. The level of this quality of life depends on the degree and intensity of participation in one of these three aspects. The quality of artistic activity, however, can be measured depending on at least two types of different values: purely esthetic values and socio-cultural values. In view of the position of the arts in general, and their nature and costs, it seems to us that a society can attain esthetic goals without State intervention. On the other hand, at first glance, it appears that there is nothing to prevent society from attaining major socio-cultural goals and objectives through the open game of the market; these goals, however, do not float in empty space; they inevitably influence esthetic values, and it is to be supposed that State action would only contribute to their greater fulfillment.

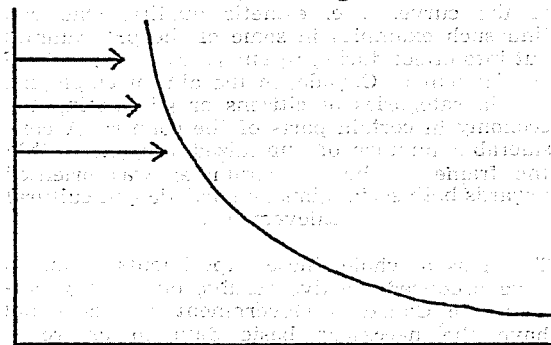
As an illustration, here is a graph whose vertical coordinate corresponds to the quality of esthetic aims to be attained, and whose horizontal coordinate corresponds to the degree of participation by people in artistic creations, i. e., in the attainment of socio-cultural goals. One can



2. Curve-line of esthetic aims and degree of participation when the State does not intervene in artistic life.

Given a situation in which the State would not intervene, I think that, like this graph, quality takes an asymptotic curve next to the vertical coordinate, which means that few people would take part in artistic activity were esthetic aims to be of an elevated level. In return, the number of participants would grow if quality were to decline, confronting us with another asymptote.

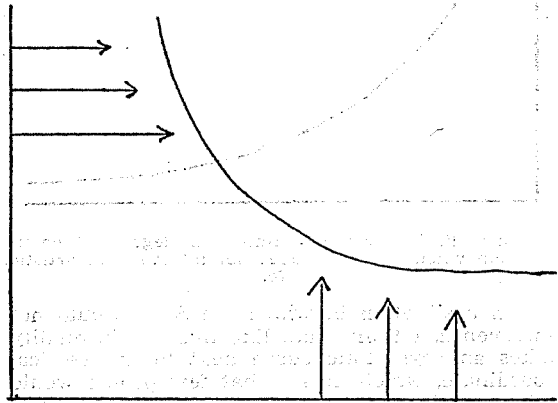
Let us now consider the situation when the State intervenes in the aim of raising the esthetic level:



3. Curve of esthetic aims and degree of participation in artistic activity when the State intervenes in the field of esthetics.

One can see that the curve swings towards the right, that esthetic aims attain higher levels and that a growing number of people take part in artistic activity. This, I am convinced, is the effective result of the action exercised by governments in the field of the arts. One soon realizes, however, that if more people participate in creative activity of a higher quality, the number of those who practically do not take part is even higher. One could also show that there is a limit to the number of esthetic aims which can attract a given population. Culture cannot be imposed.

This brings us to another interesting aspect of State intervention: action from the base upwards along the curve:



4. Curve of esthetic aims and degree of participation in artistic activity when the State intervenes in raising the esthetic and socio-cultural level.

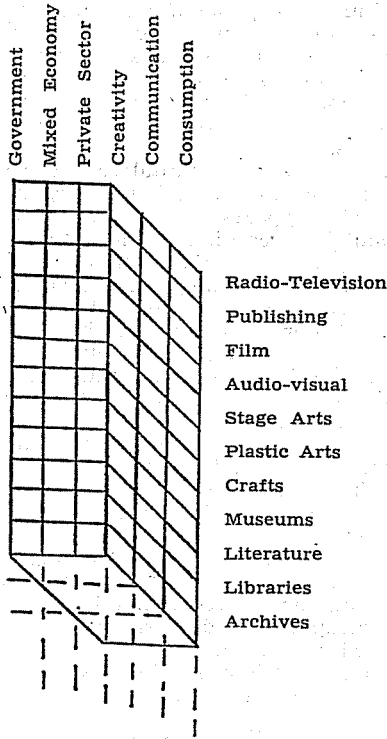
It is interesting to note that this type of intervention results in raising the general level of the curve, i. e. esthetic quality. One can find such examples in some of the programmes put into effect during recent years by the federal government of Canada, in the aim of employing certain categories of citizens or stimulating the economy in certain parts of the country. A considerable number of subsidized projects within the frame of these programmes was oriented towards both social aims and artistic and cultural achievements.

Taken as a whole, these experiments seems to have produced positive results, but, in my opinion, the Canadian Government still does not have the necessary basic data to assure it the highest possible output, both in terms of the quality of life and in terms of public participation.

In short, we must be capable of determining which combination of means would ensure us the best output with respect to the aims we wish to attain. In order to arrive at an approximately correct evaluation of these means, we should have an abundance of statistical data and qualitative analyses. We have to admit, however, that information of a quantitative character concerning artistic life is still insufficient in Canada, as it also appears to be in all the West European countries according to the conclusions drawn several years ago at the UNESCO Conference in Helsinki. Fortunately, certain countries have begun to come to grips with this problem. In Canada, the Federal Government, through the Canada Statistics and State Secretariat, has begun these last few years to compile and publish several studies on the stage arts. In addition, a certain number of non-governmental institutions have begun to compile data and it is already possible to envisage the founding of a central bank for this data. I should also like to point out the research work undertaken these past few years at several universities, especially at York University in Toronto. Nonetheless, the problems are so complex, and data so few and far between, that it seems to me that the compiling of data should be organized with order and method if we wish to attain maximum development in this work in record time.

It is extremely difficult in this sphere to make comparisons with other countries, in view of the fact that each country has its own particular way of running statistics and selecting data categories on the basis of which programmes and policy can be elaborated. Nonetheless, I shall take the liberty of proposing a three-dimensional approach to this problem.

One can see that this graph produces squares, each of which can be the subject of research on data, which can then be systematically studied. The principal advantage of such an approach is that it enables research to concentrate on priority sectors and neighbouring sectors, which is obviously more effective than dispersing one's efforts in all directions. If, for example, it is considered important to re-examine Canada's policy with respect to the stage arts, we shall not only concentrate our efforts on the four disciplines which we usually call the stage arts, i. e. music, theatre, dance and opera, but also expand research to the fields of radio-television, the cinema and audiovisual media, which are connected to the stage arts. Another advantage is that such an approach would permit comparisons between different countries. One of the major stumbling-blocks encountered by



5. Three-dimensional approach for a quantitative analyses of artistic life.

UNESCO in establishing cultural statistics is the differences between systems, when there is a system, among its 131 member-contries. When UNESCO endeavours to make a comparative outline of State expenses for cultural activity, it is forced to note that the task is impossible to fulfill because in almost all cases it would have to compare different data, it would be like comparing apples and oranges. Certain countries categorize radio-television under the heading of information, others under the heading of culture, and others still, as was recently the case in Canada, under the heading of national income; in Canada, statistical data pertaining to film is listed under the heading of services. We have yet to attempt to regroup cultural statistics in a more purposeful way.

It should be noted that the block of squares in my graph can be elongated, enlarged or raised by adding other components or sub-elements. For example, there is no obstacle to studying the contribution of universities to artistic activity separately from the contribution of the

State. In this case it would figure as an added element to the ordinates at the top. Similarly, the three elements of the vertical ordinate, i. e. creativity, communication and consumption, presume in each case a certain education, and it might be of use to study these elements separately.

Many other factors must also be taken into consideration in such an analysis, but they would not all easily be able to figure in this graph. Each should be the subject of special study. One could study, for example, the degree of interaction within each sector: the influence of radio-television on the development of the theatre, or vice versa, the influence of the social context on the development of the arts. This latter study would embrace several questions: the educational level, economic level and social conditions necessary for producing certain development in this or that artistic activity. In other words, which artistic activities are within reach of poorly educated classes, with lower incomes and an inferior social position, and under what conditions?

I just spoke of analysing artistic life with the help of a graph in which I used squares. We saw, however, that other dimensions and other variables should also be studied, especially the time variable, which would be of importance in this respect. If mathematicians and statisticians were to join up with specialists in other disciplines, with economists, sociologists and artists, then it might be possible to construct a more complex model, like the following:

$$\begin{aligned} f_1 & (a_1, a_2, a_3 \dots a_n) \\ f_2 & (b_1, b_2, b_3 \dots b_n) \\ f_3 & (c_1, c_2, c_3 \dots c_n) \\ f_n & (n_1, n_2, n_3 \dots n_n) \end{aligned}$$

6. Multidimensional approach for a quantitative analysis of artistic life.

The ultimate aim of such an approach would consist in discovering the best formula for the comprehensive development of artistic life and the quality of life, as both are mutually linked. This would quickly bring us to a discussion of social indexes. I believe that we are still far from being able in this respect to pass useful conclusions concerning the arts. Theoretically, attractive prospects emerge at this end, but it would be far simpler, I think, to stick to the facts.

What facts have we compiled on the arts in Canada? They are still few in number, but they are rapidly accumulating as a result of va-

rious research work and statistical reports which were recently begun. One can already begin to discern good results. I do not intend to furnish complete and detailed statistical data. As far as I know, such data has not yet been systematically arranged. This is a task for a central organization working on the arts and cultural activity which could turn it into an important research project.

With respect to the stage arts, for example, it might be interesting to study how knowledge of data and their mutual relationship could play a certain role in formulating cultural policy. I should like once again to stress that each policy demands resorting to a quantitative approach.

For years the Canada Arts Council has been compiling a considerable quantity of data on artistic institutions which are subsidized. In a recent study we compared data pertaining to 29 stage institutions, which enabled us to discover a certain number of trends in this field. For example, in five years costs rose from 12 to 24 million dollars, which means that they doubled and that production costs certainly account for a major part of these expenses. Income rose from 6.4 million to 12 million. The increase is large: 50% larger audience, which at present means an audience of 4 million. State and private subsidies increased from 5.2 million to 10.8 million dollars. (It should be noted that in 1967 and 1972 income and subsidies together were lower than expenses and that the deficits of those years were transferred to the next). During this period the Canada Arts Council trippled its subsidies to these institutions, from 1.8 million dollars to 5.4 million. In the provinces they more than doubled, from one million to 2.3 million dollars. Municipalities increased their subsidies by 30%, from 7 to 9 million. The contribution of the private sector rose by almost 40%, from 1.7 million dollars to 2.3 million.

These are the facts which could serve as a basis for a beforehand delineation of the road to be embarked upon with respect to the subvention of the 29 theatre troupes, whose development should be planned in agreement with them, presuming, of course, that the quality of work remains the same and that the Canadian society will further desire to see their performances. Problems arise as to the distribution of the financial burden between the organizations providing the subsidies but, generally speaking, these problems are not insoluable.

Matters begin to get complicated when we add to these organisms groups which have only recently been founded and which are beginning

to gain prestige, or when we attempt to force what groups will do which have yet to be born. Let us add the geographic problem, the possibilities of Canadians to attend stage performances, the necessity of the Canadian „content” and the role of this content in increasing the audience, improvement in the management of the stage arts, the obligations imposed by trade unions, unemployment or insufficient employment among artists, the question of facilities to be granted to the stage arts in terms of making use of the mass media. In the end one will come to a hodge-podge of difficult problems which would frighten any man who has not the necessary formation for attacking such large analyses and other experience in settling the questions pertaining to the life of the arts. In terms of the development of competencies of this nature, we have great hopes in the administrative and research programmes which for several years now have been carried out by Canadian institutions in the field of the arts. If we are not able to advance such analyses, then I am sure that we will have no outlooks for withstanding the flood of other requests for financial assistance which assail and conquer State and private treasuries. Thus, the arts would be left without the means of life and stagnation would occur in their qualitative development.

There is also competition. Here is just such an example from the cultural sector. The State in Canada particularly devotes its attention to the development of the radio and television, working through these media to preserve cultural identity which has been threatened by the development of techniques and programmes in neighbouring countries. Our radio and television service is an industry with over a half a million dollar budget; the State ensures approximately half of this sum. With respect to accessibility, the majority of Canadians have television sets, not to mention radios. It has been calculated that each Canadian spends 26 hours a week in front of the television screen, amounting to a grand total of 30 billion hours if we take into account all television viewers in Canada. These figures are of interest to our political leaders. Let us compare them with figures on the stage arts: we still lack total statistical data, but the activities of the stage arts can be evaluated at a cost of some 50 million dollars, out of which subventions account for about twenty million. One can also calculate that each year Canadians spend some twenty million hours at performances of the stage arts. The figures show that with respect to received subventions the relationship is 12 to 1 between radio and television and the stage arts, and with respect to viewers it is 1,500 to 1. The outcome effected by radio and television in

terms of audience number is far greater and this fact has not escaped the notice of those who mete out the money. Hence, other arguments must be found in support of the stage arts, if we desire to establish some kind of a balance. Some of these arguments should bear intangible elements, such as qualitative value and the intensity of the impression produced in terms of stage performances versus the average television viewer; we could also derive great benefit from quantitative analyses of the relationship between the organs of radio diffusion and the networks of theatre troupes, between artists and audiences, and analyses of the increased output which may result if the network of the stage arts is expanded; finally analyses of the growing need of the regular television viewers for more direct contact with artists and their art, etc.

Many other fields of culture could be examined in this way. Film, books, periodicals, museums, the plastic arts, they are all competing for assistance from the State budget for culture or from the private sector. We should devote attention not only to analyses which are a necessity in each individual sphere, but also to a general, global look at a cultural sector, to make its role, which is important from the standpoint of quality, clearer and more apparent through the use of facts and figures which can be compared with sectors working in the same direction. We have done this so far with rudimentary methods. We can make even more concerted efforts in this sense so as to be able to submit to those who govern us a coherent model for organizing our artistic life.

In this respect there can be no doubt that we are in good company and that is why we have everything to gain in pooling our knowledge and the fruits of our experience at a meeting such as this.



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