

LEADERSHIP IN ART EDUCATION

Sir Herbert Read, a case study

Author:

John Steers, General Secretary, National Society for Education in Art & Design,
3 Mason's Wharf, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 9FY, United Kingdom.

johnsteers@nsead.org

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Introduction

When Ann Kuo, the past president of the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) wrote to me early this year to tell me that I was to be the recipient of the Society's 2011 Sir Herbert Read Award I felt extremely honoured to be acknowledged in this way by my peers – by the many people within the Society for whom I have a very deep respect. It is a particular honour for me, as I hope will become apparent, because the award is made in the name of Sir Herbert Read.

My pleasure at receiving the award was slightly tempered when it became clear that I was also expected to make a presentation at the World Congress in Budapest. I began to consider possible topics and perhaps rather too casually decided on something about leadership in art and design education. Panic then followed as I realised I had embarked upon a topic which, to be truthful, I had never really thought

over much about – most of us, I suspect, just try to get on and provide some sort of leadership as best we can.

My first reaction was to turn to the dictionary – several dictionaries – in the hope of enlightenment. They simply stated the obvious: leadership refers to someone in the position or with the function of a leader. Leadership can refer to the period during which a person occupies the position of leader of a group of some kind; of a country, an army, an expedition or an organisation for example. However, just being a leader does not necessarily imply success or altruistic and democratic motives – it takes only a moment to realise that some leaders have been calamitous.

When we think of ‘great’ leaders it is apparent that they have qualities that give them the ability to lead in an extraordinary ways. From the past century we might think of people such as Martin Luther King, Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and, more recently, Aung San Suu Kyi. What seems to unite them is clarity of vision, defined goals and extraordinary perseverance often in the face of powerful official or governmental opposition. There is something heroic about them, perhaps a quality we sometimes think of as ‘charisma’. Such leaders often come to the fore when there is a crisis, a special problem or a great cause – as the saying goes ‘cometh the hour cometh the man’ (or, of course, woman).

Leadership – a case study

I tried to think of an archetypal leader to see what more I could learn. I chose an example from the field of exploration rather than politics, education or the arts.

Someone who for me epitomises the idea of the heroic leader is the Antarctic

explorer Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton.

The Norwegian Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole just a hundred years ago in 1911. In 1914, Shackleton made his third voyage to the Antarctic in the ship *Endurance*, planning to be the first to traverse Antarctica by way of the South Pole.

Early in 1915, *Endurance* became trapped in the ice, was crushed and, nearly a year later, the ship sank. Shackleton and his crew had long before abandoned the ship to camp on the ice pack. In April 1916, they left the *Endurance* man-hauling three small boats, sailing them whenever ice conditions allowed. Eventually, after great hardships, they reached the isolated and uninhabited Elephant Island.

Taking five crew members, Shackleton went to find help. In an open boat, the *James Caird*, the men spent sixteen days crossing over a thousand kilometres of the Southern Ocean to reach South Georgia. Shackleton with two companions then crossed the untracked glaciers and mountains of that hostile island to a whaling station and safety. Subsequently he organised a rescue mission in Chile and all the remaining men from the expedition were rescued in August 1916. Not one of the crew died in the course of this epic escape and, despite great privation, none were forced into those desperate last resorts of polar exploration – either eating your boots or your companions. 'South', Shackleton's (1919) account of these exploits is well worth reading.

What does this story tell us about leadership? Doyle and Smith (2001) in an exploration of classical leadership suggest:

...leaders are people who are able to think and act creatively in non-routine situations – and who set out to influence the actions, beliefs and feelings of others. In this sense being a ‘leader’ is personal. It flows from an individual’s qualities and actions. However, it is also often linked to some other role such as manager or expert. Here there can be a lot of confusion. Not all managers, for example, are leaders; and not all leaders are managers.

Theories of leadership expounded by Bass (1990) conclude that there are three basic ways to explain how people become leaders:

- The Trait Theory – some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles.
- The Great Events Theory – a crisis or important event may cause a person to rise to the occasion, which brings out extraordinary leadership qualities in an ordinary person.

Bass suggests that while these two categories are relatively uncommon the following pathway is much more frequently encountered:

- People can choose to become leaders. People can learn leadership skills. This is the Transformational or Process Leadership Theory.

Shackleton probably best fits into the Great Events category, although prior to his Antarctic expedition it is evident that he already had recognised leadership qualities. There is no doubt that he was far more than a manager – somebody who led by example.

Sir Herbert Read – a brief biography

This may all seem a long way from art education but I began to wonder how these theories might apply to Sir Herbert Read. Nearly half a century after his death just how much do most InSEA members know about him beyond his seminal 1943 book *Education through Art*? And, of course, the title has a precise form of words later adopted in the name of our Society. I realised I might be one of the few remaining members of InSEA who actually met him, albeit briefly and at a distance. Although our paths only crossed once I continue to feel some real affinity with Herbert Read. My first distant encounter was as a first year art student when I received as a prize Read's *A Concise History of Modern Painting* (1959). Looking recently at my battered copy I realised how significantly it continues to influence my perception of painting in the first half of the twentieth century.

A year or two later, in 1966, I was a postgraduate student teacher at Goldsmiths College, London, where *Education through Art* was compulsory reading. I was unaware at the time of the long association of my tutors Seonaid Robertson and Anton Ehrensweig with Herbert Read and the high esteem in which they held him. And then in the early 1980s when my involvement with InSEA began, I recognised his contribution to this Society as one of its founding fathers. There is yet another tenuous link: Read was the President of the [British] Society for Education through Art (SEA). That society and the National Society for Art Education (NSAE) had flirted with the idea of a merger since the 1940s. Eventually, in 1984, after renewed negotiations that I initiated, a merger took place leading to the formation of the present National Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD) for which I have worked for the past 30 years. I think Read would have approved of the merger; he

was never a stick in the mud. Later as a trustee of the National Arts Education Archive: Bretton Hall I developed a greater understanding of Read's achievements.

It seemed appropriate therefore to use this opportunity to look at Read's career and his leadership in art education. I have to admit at this point that I make no claims to be a Read scholar and I am deeply indebted to the work of my friend and colleague, the late Dr David Thistlewood, in what follows.

Herbert Edward Read was born in 1893 in Kirbymoorside, Yorkshire in the North of England, the eldest of three sons of a tenant farmer. After leaving school in Halifax aged 16, he worked as a clerk in the Leeds Savings Bank but continued his education at evening classes and in the public library. By the time the First World War broke out he was studying law and economics at the University of Leeds before volunteering in 1915 to fight in France.

David Thistlewood provides this brief portrait:

Herbert Read was a poet devoted to the evocation of vivid pictorial imagery, especially of his native northern English countryside. He was also an internationally-respected historian of ceramics and stained glass, and was strongly committed to the modern revitalisation of industrial design. He was a literary critic, contributing important studies of the English Romantic poets Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley. Twice decorated for bravery in the First World War, he subsequently became a pacifist and theoretical anarchist. His unconventional politics did not prevent his being honoured with a knighthood, nor his belonging to the British cultural establishment as signified in honorary

professorships, prestigious lectureships and ambassadorial duties for such organisations as the British Council. But in spite of this diversity of achievement he is best remembered for two things: art historians acknowledge him as an important critic of, and apologist for, the avant-garde art of his lifetime – particularly English and European Modernism; and art educationists recall him as a profound explicator and defender of children's creativity – he was, of course, a very active Chairman and President of the [British] Society for Education in Art, [later the Society for Education through Art]. (Thistlewood 1993b: 143)

The quality of his war time leadership can hardly be in doubt. He joined his local Yorkshire Regiment 'The Green Howards' in 1915 and, by 1917, had been promoted to the rank of Captain. In 1918 he was decorated with two awards for gallantry, the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order. He was also mentioned in despatches. The DSO is particularly remarkable because this medal is normally only given to officers in command with a rank *higher* than that of Captain serving under enemy fire. It is ranked second only to the Victoria Cross, the highest British military award.

Serving in the trenches in the 1914-1918 War must have been a profoundly life-changing experience. It is said that at the start of the war in 1914, the life expectancy of a frontline junior officer such as Read was eleven days. Averaged over the whole war it was one month. Read was only 23 at the end of the war and he must have known how incredibly lucky he was to survive. His 21-year-old brother, Charles, was less fortunate; he was killed in France in October 1918, only weeks before the end of the war.

His war poems give some insight into his experience and reaction to the horrors and futility of war in the trenches and into why subsequently he became a pacifist. His poem *The Execution of Cornelius Vane* is particularly moving – the tragic story of a bewildered, terrified and shell shocked young soldier shot for alleged desertion by his comrades in arms. After losing contact with his unit through a series of mishaps he wanders behind the lines, eventually finding some solace in the peace of the fields. Finally, forced by hunger, he enters a village. The poem ends:

He was charged with desertion
And eventually tried by court-martial.
The evidence was heavy against him,
And he was mute in his own defence.
A dumb anger and despair
Filled his soul.

He was found guilty.

Sentence: To suffer death by being shot.

The sentence duly confirmed,
One morning at dawn they led him forth.
He saw a party of his own regiment,
With rifles, looking very sad.
The morning was bright, and as they tied
The cloth over his eyes, he said to the assembly:

"What wrong have I done that I should leave these –

The bright sun rising

And the birds that sing?"

(Read in Roberts 1996: 294)

Surely Read must have had personal knowledge of such events? His war time experiences were at the root of his later philosophical or theoretical anarchism. He eschewed violence but considered that his brand of anarchism encapsulated his beliefs '...because it embraced principles of individual freedom, self determination, and a social framework of common interest groupings, to which he himself added the idea of an avant-garde, agitating on behalf of free creativity'. (Thistlewood 1993b: 147)

Between the First and Second World Wars, from 1922 to 1931, Herbert Read was the assistant keeper of ceramics and stained glass at Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He was very active in London literary life, editing various anthologies and becoming well known as an art critic. He was an admirer of the work of Carl Jung and a close friend of T S Eliot. He succeeded Roger Fry as the editor of the *Burlington Magazine* (1933-39) and in 1940 he became an editor of the English Master Painters series of monographs. He remains well known as the critic who first championed such British artists as Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. He held various academic posts including professor of fine art at Edinburgh University from 1931 to 1933, a lecturer in art at the University of Liverpool (1935-1936), Leon Fellow at the University of London (1940-1942), and Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard University (1953-1954).

Education through Art

Herbert Read's interest in child art and education actually developed late in his life. During the Second World War he was asked to organise an exhibition of children's drawings and paintings that would tour allied and neutral countries in lieu of more valuable works from the national collections. Thistlewood writes:

Read, in making his collection, was unexpectedly moved by the expressive power and emotional content of some of the younger artists' works. This experience prompted his special attention to their cultural value, and his engagement of the theory of children's creativity with a seriousness matching his devotion to the avant-garde. This work both changed fundamentally his own life's work throughout his remaining twenty-five years and provided art education with a rationale of unprecedented lucidity and persuasiveness. (Thistlewood 1993: 143)

Thistlewood continues:

Read elaborated a sociocultural dimension of creative education, offering the notion of greater international understanding and cohesiveness rooted in principles of developing the fully-balanced personality through art education. Child art was the driving force of this philosophy: the heroic task of education was to prevent the young child from losing access to whatever ancient, ingrained, cultural wisdom he or she was able to manifest in symbolisation. (Thistlewood 1993: 144)

Again I am heavily indebted to David Thistlewood for the following information. Research at the University of London in 1941-1942 resulted in his seminal work *Education through Art* which was published in the dark days of 1943. Thistlewood suggests that those who know Read's work only by reputation may be forgiven for believing that the book is essentially a philosophy of the *expressive* in children's art. However he explains:

It is partly this but not entirely, for it is true that one of its main strands of argument confirmed the importance of expressive child art, and therefore provided enormous support for a form of practice that had been struggling to make inroads into the 'official' curriculum since the 1920s. The great challenge for those who promoted the expressive in the work of the young had been to respond to suggestions that it led nowhere literally (it seemed), in the sense that expressive abilities were said to deteriorate naturally with the onset of adolescence; and educationally, in the sense that expression was said to be an *outpouring* rather than a *taking-in* of meaning. Read provided an impressive defence against such accusations of aimlessness, in the form of socioeconomic and psychological arguments about the vital necessity of nurturing creative aptitudes for the sake of civilisation. But it is important to stress that what he advocated was a form of education founded in *creativity* with the expressive playing its part beside a host of other complementary attributes. (Thistlewood 1992a: 131)

This book provided art education with a rationale, a defence and an optimistic programme. It comprised definitions of authenticity in art and art-making; offered explanations of the materialising of images from the imagination; compared typologies discernible in the

literature of psychology and in the study of children's drawings and paintings; and proposed that the *variety* evident within such typologies supported the principle that everyone could be regarded as a special kind of artist.

It was as President of the Society for Education in Art that Read had a platform for addressing UNESCO. He welcomed policies expressed at UNESCO's launching conference in 1946 such as those devoted to the cultivation of worldwide understanding through education, and the elimination of international conflicts based on mutual ignorance and misunderstanding. These ideas are still clearly reflected in the preamble to the Constitution of InSEA. At the same time he was critical of conventional modes of education, and a perceived confusion of *culture* with *learning*, *education* with *propaganda*. In a lecture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (timed to coincide with a sitting of the United Nations): '... he delivered a devastating critique of attempts to prevent war with arguments addressed to minds corrupted with individuated intellectualisation: a moral revolution required the total reorientation of the human personality, which could only be secured by integrative education'. (Thistlewood 1993b:157)

I have written elsewhere (Steers 2005) about the early history of InSEA and Read's role in the founding of the International Society for Education through Art, which he was instrumental in finally establishing under the auspices of UNESCO in 1954. His last years were devoted to the proclamation of his philosophy of education through art throughout the world, especially in the proceedings of InSEA.

He received much recognition: he was knighted in 1953 'for services to literature'; received the Erasmus Prize (1966) for contributions to European culture; was president (and co-

founder) of the Institute of Contemporary Arts; a president of the British Society of Aesthetics; and a trustee of the Tate Gallery.

In May 1966, shortly before his death, a special commemorative day to celebrate his life was held at Goldsmiths College, London. I was a student there at the time and I can still see in my mind's eye a rather diminutive, white haired figure sitting faintly embarrassed on the platform in the Great Hall while others offered appreciations of his work, readings from his poetry and prose, a musical performance and an international exhibition of children's art.

Aged 74, Read ended his days in 1968 at The Old Rectory in Stonegrave not far from his birthplace in Yorkshire. In 1985 a memorial to the First World War Poets was unveiled in Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey, London. Herbert Read was included among that select and celebrated number. The poignant text by the poet Wilfred Owen on the plain slate slab reads: 'My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity'.

How should we now evaluate Sir Herbert Read's leadership?

In the winter of 1968-1969, the Society for Education *through* Art (note the subtle change of name) dedicated an issue of its journal *Athene* to the memory of Read. The InSEA president of the day, Eleanor Hipwell, edited an anthology of the letters she received in response to Read's death. She commented, 'It is frequently forgotten by us on this island [Great Britain], that his reputation abroad was so immense...'. (Hipwell 1968: 17) This was borne out by eloquent contributions from Italy, Canada, The Netherlands, USA, France, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Poland, the former Yugoslavia and from UNESCO.

One of the most moving tributes was written by Edwin Ziegfeld, the first president of InSEA, who wrote with great affection about his impressions of Read and the UNESCO seminar held in Bristol in 1951 when the idea of InSEA was first explored:

To all his utterances he brought clarity of thinking and brilliance of insight. Added to this was the impact of his delivery. The clear, thin, and only slightly modulated voice seemed at first a model of understatement. But as one listened one was aware of an almost incandescent intensity which burned behind it, and hearing Sir Herbert Read became both an intellectual and aesthetic experience.

...The highlight however, which gave the whole show its impetus and meaning, was the address delivered by Herbert Read. We all remember the occasion vividly. We still see him, slight, unobtrusive, modest, his manners friendly and courteous, his humour quiet, introverted, his speech quietly voiced, but flowing, in words and phrases that brought out all the beauties of the English tongue. His delivering in itself was a work of art. (Zeigfeld 1968-69: 24)

This description was confirmed in Read's obituary in *The Times* where the anonymous writer observed:

...on juries and committees of all kinds his meaningful silences and occasional brief bursts of eloquence turned out to be immensely effective. His foreign colleagues came, in fact, to ascribe an almost Delphic importance to his interventions: 'When Read does at last open his mouth', one of them once remarked, 'you know there's nothing more to be said'. (*The Times* 1968)

Seonaid Robertson wrote:

While [Read's] extraordinary width of interest remained to the last, his love and enjoyment of works of art, his critical insight, his political involvement (for he remained 'the gentle anarchist'), and above all his poetic writing; to these he remained devoted, but the frail energy of his last years was spent on the cause of education. To one who would have chosen to be remembered as a poet this was a sacrifice demanded by his concern for people. His life no less than his philosophy expressed a holistic vision. (Robertson 1968: 27)

Undoubtedly the vast majority of art teachers at the time were very responsive to Read's ideas. He was already a major figure, a respected art critic, and his philosophy of education through art provided great advocacy for the importance of art in the curriculum.

Robertson commented:

But perhaps one of his most important gifts to us was to be our sword bearer, our champion in lists where most of us art teachers were ill-equipped to fight. That book, *Education through Art*, not only bamboozled the psychologists with their own jargon, it joined battle with the academic educators on their own ground, and it made art education respectable. (Robertson 1968: 25)

The book placed art at the heart of the curriculum with the power to change not only schooling but society. Late in his life he succinctly summarised his views in a pamphlet entitled *Education through Art: A Revolutionary Policy*.

We declare that our foremost aim is 'the establishment of an education in art which will develop the imaginative and creative powers of children', and that, to the outside world, must seem as harmless as any cause that ever brought

two or three people together. But those who have followed through the implications of this aim know that it is packed with enough dynamite to shatter the existing educational system, and to bring about a revolution in the whole structure of our society. (Read 1965: 1)

Thistlewood attributes the success of Read's philosophy to his observation that children quite naturally produce imagery which maintains contact with the deepest levels of social experience, and with times when social cohesion was the normal order. He suggests a corollary, which attracted art teachers '...and explains the enormous, immediate and continued, success of his book was that defects of modern life – injustice, immorality, harsh competition, even war – had roots in prevailing systems of education and, specifically, in an emphasising of intellectual development to the exclusion of everything else, visited upon children from around the age of ten' (Thistlewood 1993b: 156). Clearly what the policy makers considered to be liberal education, in Read's view, was nothing more than systematic repression. A sentiment that sadly is just as pertinent in England today as it was half a century ago.

Malcolm Ross reminds us that Read also succeeded in popularising in the United Kingdom and further afield the key texts of Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Rousseau. But Read acknowledged as his mentor and hero Caldwell Cook, an eccentric English teacher at the Perse School, Cambridge, whose 1917 book *The Play Way* was an inspiration for Read's own writing. In *Education through Art* Read quotes Cook:

'No impression without expression' is a hoary maxim, but even today learning is often *knowing* without much care for *feeling*, and mostly none at all for *doing*.

Learning may remain detached, as a garment, unidentified with self. But by Play [and here Read inserted the word Art] I mean the *doing* anything one *knows* with one's heart in it. The final appreciation in life and in study is to put oneself into the thing studied and to live there *active*. (Read 1943: 231)

Read points out that, although published twenty-five years earlier, the education system as a whole had remained virtually impervious to Cook's message. Have most education systems progressed much further even now, given that almost a century has passed?

Read's ideas, if not entirely forgotten, are no longer at the forefront of discourse in art education. Ross writes:

If the tide has turned against him now, in the 1940s Read caught the flood at its height. His message was music to the ears of a nation shaking down after a titanic, life and death struggle, to the task of building a new world. Read had long been a fighter in the cause of democracy. For Read the equation was simple: to raise a democratic society you have to have a democratic education system. Since there wasn't one, it would have to be built. (Ross 1993: 136)

I believe the core ideas of *Education through Art* still have great relevance. Perhaps three years ago I said as much in a discussion over an NSEAD lunch at the Royal College of Art in London. Others picked up the idea and this September a new secondary school will open in England under the academies programme where the curriculum will be underpinned by this idea. After all, *Education through Art* is a theory of general education conducted *through* art and, in this case, design. I hope it succeeds; if it does there is a chance some more might follow. It is very interesting

that President Obama's Committee on the Arts and Humanities in their milestone 2011 report *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools* make reference the importance of 'arts integration' which is '... loosely defined as teaching *through* and *with* the arts, creating relationships between different arts disciplines and other classroom skills and subjects'.(PCAH 2011: 19)

What makes a good leader?

Kerry Freedman (2011: 41) makes an important distinction between advocacy and leadership: 'Advocacy focuses on supporting and maintaining art education programs. But, leadership enables change, improvement, and the cultivation of new ideas'. By this token Read was certainly more than an advocate; he was a true leader. She continues:

Creative leadership provides a vision for the future that, for example, takes into account the increasing attention of students to socio-cultural conditions, sustainable design, visual technologies, and popular visual culture, which can attract students to elective programs. Leadership can encourage school and community program transformation, promoting growth in the field and new learning opportunities for students. (Freedman 2011: 41)

I have a sense Read would have approved of that – he had no fear of new technologies and, for example, he was also committed to revitalising industrial design.

Freedman also points out that it is necessary to stay in touch with the field, to be grounded in current debates about forward-looking art education. As Read was President of the SEA he certainly remained in touch and far from fixed in his views. One momentous occasion was that Society's conference at Bretton Hall in April 1956. Read chaired most of the three day event. Early presentations and discussions confirmed the then current view that the only area where direct teaching was advisable was in relation to craftsmanship; this at the time was the accepted orthodoxy. Harry Thubron spoke on the third day about 'An Experiment in Basic Art Education' – ideas that formed the basis of the 'Basic Design' movement developed by Thubron and his colleagues Victor Pasmore and Tom Hudson (both of whom attended the conference). A further contribution from Maurice de Saumarez (who succeeded Read as president of the SEA) talked of the relationship between science, technology and art. This was anathema to most of those present, those sometimes mocked as the 'woolly stocking brigade'. The audience was divided and it is clear that a very passionate, even stormy, debate broke out. After due consideration, the next day Read gave his backing to Thubron, to the Young Turks, on several key points. Norbert Lynton notes:

[Read's] words were moderate, but he too said that painting and drawing were not necessarily the most productive forms of activity for children and young people if one was concerned to develop mental powers and meet psychological needs which tradition had ignored. Art could neither avert its gaze from modern technology, nor hope to function as a 'fifth column' to work against technology. The essential thing was to show that art could match any other aspect of education in providing a base for technological development. (Lynton 1992:

It is evident that Read's promotion of the avant-garde in fine art also extended to the avant-garde in art education.

I guess wounds and hurt pride were eventually healed. One of the SEA's staunchest advocates of the crafts in education was Seonaid Robertson, my tutor at Goldsmiths College in the 1960s. She had been taught by Read at Edinburgh College of Art in the 1930s and had fallen under his spell. That she held no hard feelings is evidenced by the eulogy she wrote after Read's death and which I will quote later. Incidentally, another of my tutors at that time, who worked not exactly in harmony with Robertson, was the psychologist Anton Ehrensweig, the author of *The Hidden Order of Art* (1967). Ehrensweig and Read had exchanged ideas from the 1930s onwards about the principle of formlessness in relations to imagination and creativity. Ehrensweig considered the incubation of images and forms to be a repeating cycle of 'conscious planning and unconscious scanning', form and formlessness. (Significantly David Thistlewood's book on Herbert Read (1984) is subtitled *Formlessness and Form, An introduction to his aesthetics*. The influence of these ideas and Carl Jung's concept of the universal archetype are evident in Read's writing.

The Charismatic Leader

Was Read a charismatic leader? What do we mean by this? Charisma is often described as an almost spiritual power or personality that gives an individual exceptional influence or authority over a large number of people. Such leaders gain influence because they often seem to offer a way out for people who are under-represented in some way. They become a figurehead, somebody who can offer solutions, somebody who has the answers. (Gerth and Mills 1991: 51-55).

Nevertheless falling under the spell of a charismatic leader can involve dependency and the abdication of individual responsibility rather than looking to one's own capacities. Read (1965) addressed this issue:

...the great periods of civilisation always had such a hero as a supreme teacher – a Hercules, a Buddha, a Christ. But the hero, as we know to our cost, can also mislead a people, and for that reason we must distinguish sharply between the hero, who remains a myth, and the leader who dominates the herd. You have only to think of the figures of Buddha and Christ on the one hand, and of Napoleon or Hitler on the other hand, to realise the difference. The hero is the man or woman who delivers us from convention, who gives us the courage, by his [sic] example, to be true to the law of one's own being. (Read 1965: 10)

Everyday leadership

According to a US Army manual (1983), the key to good leadership is an honourable character and selfless service to your organization. People want to be guided by those they respect and who have a clear sense of direction. To gain respect, they

must be ethical and trustworthy. A sense of direction is achieved by conveying a strong vision of the future. Similarly, to paraphrase Kouzes & Posner (1987), the road to successful leadership that is common to successful leaders involves:

- Identifying a cause that you really believe in and where you believe reform or improvement is vitally necessary.
- Inspiring a shared vision and communicating that vision to your followers.
- Enabling others to act by giving them the ideas, tools and methods to solve the problem.
- Modelling the way – not just telling others what to do but showing how it can be done.
- Encouraging the heart – sharing success with your followers, keeping the disappointments to yourself.

Other pundits on leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1991) maintain that effective leaders may work within one or more frameworks:

- The Structural Framework – where the leader is a social architect whose leadership style is analysis and design.
- A Human Resource Framework – where the leader is a catalyst and servant whose leadership style is support, advocating, and empowerment.
- A Political Framework – where the leader is an advocate, whose leadership style is coalition and building; they build linkages to other stakeholders, use persuasion first, and then use negotiation and coercion only if necessary.

A Symbolic Framework – where the leader is a prophet, whose leadership style is inspirational.

If these analyses of what makes a good leader are correct then I think we can say with confidence that by all these tokens Sir Herbert Read was a successful leader, not least in the cause of promoting art and design education. He was a clear thinker, a good advocate who empowered others and, it seems from all accounts, he was both charismatic and inspirational.

Such personal charisma eludes most of us. Few, if any of us, can aspire to have the lasting influence or be as inspirational as Sir Herbert Read. After a career spent, like most of you, continually seeking to promote art and design education where possible and to defend it when necessary, I tend to think of leadership in art education as a Sisyphean task. You will remember Sisyphus, the King of Corinth and by all accounts a cunning knave who deserved his punishment, who was condemned by the Gods to an eternity of frustrating and hard labour. His task was to roll a massive boulder to the top of a mountain. Only every time Sisyphus, exhausted, reached the summit, the rock rolled back down again.

I have some sympathy for Sisyphus and, despite his failings, I sometimes feel some of his cunning, his ability for subversion, would not come amiss. In 1999, I co-authored a manifesto for art in schools (Steers and Swift, 1999). We were told by the authorities that our wide-ranging demands for root and branch change in the curriculum, assessment and teacher education were absurd and unattainable. Yet by early 2010 almost everything we asked for was in place. After years of consultations

and re-drafting, we had a new secondary curriculum in England that had the overwhelming support of art and design teachers and some sensible reforms to examinations. It was not perfect, but it seemed that the boulder was nearly at the summit – perhaps ready maybe to roll down the other side. All that came to an end with the election of a new government in May 2010. We are back in defensive mode, fighting for the survival of the arts in the curriculum, and the boulder is at the bottom of the hill again.

I guess that nearly all of us at this congress are both leaders and advocates in one way or another. What have I learnt from being in a national leadership role for thirty years? Few can rely on being as inspirational as Read. Instead an important capability seems to be persistence and sheer stamina. Learn not to give up. Advocacy is not just about opposition and tunnel vision won't help. Get involved. Try to see the big picture, to develop an understanding of what's possible, reinterpret and update the rationales for others. There are times when it helps to go with the flow of history. Be alert to opportunities – opportunism has never been a derogatory term for me.

Why is it worth the effort of fighting for art education? There are many rationales we can offer, some more believable than others, most of which will be familiar to you. Read offers his own compelling answer: 'The worth of a civilization or a culture is not valued in the terms of its material wealth or military power, but by the quality and achievements of its representative individuals – its philosophers, its poets and its artists'. (Read,n.d.) (I wonder if John F Kennedy (1963) consciously paraphrased this in his Amherst College speech in October 1963. Kennedy said 'And the nation which

disdains the mission of art invites the fate ... of having "nothing to look backward to with pride, and nothing to look forward to with hope".)

So, to conclude, undoubtedly Read was a polymath and an exceptional leader and we are especially fortunate that he decided to devote so much of his energy to promoting art education and being instrumental in founding this Society. Like Shackleton, early in his life he was a man of action – physical action – but later his leadership was of a different but no less important kind. In his obituary it was remarked:

People who met him for the first time, struck by his delicate and sensitive appearance and shy manner were likely to be surprised... [by his military decorations]. The anomaly, however was a matter of looks and manner only, for a brief acquaintance with Read's work was enough to show that one of his most pronounced characteristics was the cold courage of the 'resolute soldier'... (The Times 1968)

You could say that both Read and Shackleton were men of destiny, men with vision, perseverance and perhaps men with charisma, who grasped the opportunities that came their way. As Read himself once said 'A man of personality can formulate ideals, but only a man of character can achieve them'. (Read, n.d.) Sir Herbert Read was a man of character and it is his leadership and vision that I wish to honour.

Epilogue

Sir Herbert Read

Herbert Read was a Renaissance Man,
He encountered all of the human disciplines, made relationships
Among them, and gave form to new ideas that resulted.

Herbert Read was a Universal Man,
He transcended artificial boundary lines, limits,
Barricades, penetrated frontiers, both physical and symbolic.

Herbert Read was an ever Young-Old Man,
Young in his daring, his continuing adventure, his courage
To enter new domains of thought, to stir controversy,
Defy established notions; and old in his grasp of life.
His vision incorporated the blessings of youth and age,
Of primitive man and of Twenty-first century man.

Herbert Read was an Arts Man,
Though he understood and welcomed the most advanced technology
Of his time, he never lost sight of the central human aesthetic.
In this depth of comprehension, he helped guard and develop
Man's intuitive, spiritual nature.

Herbert Read was a Man,
He embraced Man. He was, and is, embraced by Man.

(D'Arcy Hayman 1968-69: 2)

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