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A Scandinavian View on the Aesthetics as a Learning Media

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Abstract: As the aesthetic learning process is always relational and developed in interaction with the surrounding culture, the participants in the aesthetic activities can develop cultural identity and social skills. Add to this that the individual can share its inner world with others through aesthetic activities in the potential space and in this way create balance between its inner and outer world, realize itself and develop individual and collective identity. Last but not least aesthetic activities strengthen the joy of life, and they are an arena for development of imagination and creativity – society's most important resources.

The two Danish authors argue for this point of view based on a triangle of psychological, philosophical and social scientifically approaches provided through the last two decades of Scandinavian research in particular. First and foremost they refer to the Norwegian social scientist Hansjörg Hohr's three learning methods, among these the Aesthetic Learning Method, but also to the English psychologist Donald W. Winnicott's theory of the Potential Space and the Danish philosopher Mogens Pahuus' concept of "being in tune". On this background the authors sum up the potentials of art education and finally offer a new definition of an aesthetic learning process.

Key words: Aesthetics, art based education, learning processes

1. Introduction

What is an aesthetic learning process and what significance can an aesthetic framework have for man's development and learning?

Throughout the Scandinavian pedagogical and didactic debate these days, you often come across the concept of aesthetics expressed as the aesthetic dimension, aesthetic learning processes and aesthetic practice, for instance. When you examine these texts and statements closer, you may get the impression that aesthetics have developed into an extremely airy concept, a "hooray" word that embraces anything tasteful, artistic, sensuous, harmonic, beautiful and experience-oriented. Using a tree as metaphor, we can say that "aesthetics" has many roots. Some deliver nourishment through philosophy, some through the study of society and culture, some by means of the arts or consideration of human psychology, especially developmental psychology and learning styles. All of these lie within the frame of humanistic scientific theory yet exert their influence together with all the inductive or hermeneutic understanding mankind has gathered over the millennia.

That we have inherited, and still generate, so many different approaches to the understanding of aesthetics may seem bewildering, for what in fact is the "stem" of this approach, the branches of which are as widely spread

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as the network of roots below? Is it possible to speak of a single stem? Too wide an aesthetics concept is difficult to use as anchoring of the pedagogical and didactic work associated with the art-based subjects in the education system. If the concept is to be meaningful and operational within this area, we therefore have to define it further. This article is our attempt at such a clarification.

1.1 Methodology and Premises

As authors we both have many years of experience with art, teaching and research and we have many developmental projects behind us. In this paper empirical practice has a role only as sounding board for a more theoretical approach based on a comparative literature review mainly among Danish and Scandinavian research. Some of the authors referenced will be unknown to many readers outside Scandinavia although their theoretical positions will not be. Our approach is pragmatic. We are primarily interested in which aesthetics framework is most user-friendly and gives the fullest understanding in the pedagogical setting. Our thinking and interest is, of course, much affected by our own professional contexts and the post-modern society in which an ever greater part of society is being aestheticized while the current thrust of education, by contrast, is slowly reducing and demarcating aesthetically based subjects in all educational context - in spite of a steadily growing interest in the development of creative and innovative skills and qualification especially within the business community. Such premises naturally influence this article in which we, through grounding in philosophy and modern pedagogical aesthetic research, will discuss existing aesthetic approaches and against that background will develop a new operationalization of an approach to aesthetics which, in our view, provides clarity in today's context.

Below we will briefly present three essential approaches to a learning-oriented aesthetics concept: a socialization-theoretical, a psychological and a philosophical approach.

However, first we will problematize two common and widespread interpretations of aesthetics.

2. Problematizations

2.1 Aesthetics as Sensory Experience

The term aesthetics comes from Greek, aistesis, and can be translated with the words sensation, sensuousness and feeling. This terminology forms the basis of a widespread interpretation of aesthetics as a type of recognition, "sensory recognition", giving the senses a special physiologically based experience and recognition potential.

A plethora of Scandinavian researchers describe the aesthetic as a particularly sensory quality of experience, as knowledge gained through the senses as opposed to theoretical understanding:

"Aesthetic learning processes happen when people meet sense-objects" (K. Fink-Jensen & A. M. Nielsen, 2009; p. 205).

Fink-Jensen and Nielsen, however, argue that an aesthetic experience is not just a simple experience of a sensed object. It is an especially focused experience wherein the offered "experience", that is the sensuous and representative quality inherent in the object, is available to the sensuously attentive and fully present subject. An aesthetic experience is, thus understood, a qualitatively focused experience of a sensed object (K. Fink-Jensen & A. M. Nielsen, 2009). This way of thinking emanates from modern phenomenology wherein the value of an aesthetic experience or an encounter with nature depends upon a particular way in which the senses are held open to the world.

Here the aesthetics offer a special point of view (B. Paulsen, 1994):

"The broad aesthetic approach embraces everything which can be sensed or experienced, without thought as

to the potential use of the sense-object, its monetary value, its relationship to other objects etc. The whole world can be seen through the aesthetic paradigm" (B. Paulsen, 1994; p. 33).

2.2 Aesthetic as the School of Beauty

Next to this view on aesthetics flourishes a widespread and more culturally based interpretation based on the Antiquity's worship of beauty in the material world, as a reflection of or transcendence in relation to the underlying religious and societal cosmos.

The term "beauty" may be taken to refer, on the one hand, to special characteristics of form inherent in work, for example in rhyme, in proportions, in final totality, and on the other hand to the universal order which such characteristics either portray or symbolize as is made clear in *Plato's* (Socrates') (B. Jowett, 2011) definition of beauty in the third century BC:

"… understand me to mean straight lines and circles, and the plane or solid figures which are formed out of them by turning lathes and rulers and measurers of angles; for these I affirm to be not only relatively beautiful, like other things, but they are eternally and absolutely beautiful" (B. Jowett, 2011; p. 113).

This spiritual or religious approach to the concept was anchored further through Romanticism's mysticism and nature religion and is still referred to as 'the school of beauty' today, as it appears in art and nature in particular (D. Jørgensen, 2001).

"The idea that art and aesthetics are sacred experiences has nothing to do with any change in the historical function they have had for those experiencing them. Neither does this idea consider the historical origins of art or aesthetic; it encompasses more the foundation of their existence" (D. Jørgensen, 2001; p. 28).

"Beauty" as a concept is thus far wider than art. It includes craft, architecture and art, indeed all creation of form, and relates to more than simply physical form in that it has, historically, had the social function of delineating the good, the morally correct and the sacred.

2.3 Discussion

In our opinion defining aesthetics solely as sensory recognition can be problematic. Psychologists such as Jean Piaget and Daniel Stern have thus throughout the last century documented that all human recognition takes its starting point in the sensory motor co-ordination, where there child actively through motor function and senses explores and takes in the surrounding world. According to Piaget, being present in the world involves constant sensory impulses, where the experiences you acquire in your sensory meeting with the world form inner diagrams through an adaption process that represent man's current knowledge of the world.

In the same way, modern philosophy, stated most clearly in phenomenology (M. Merleau-Ponty in T. H. Rasmussen, 2011), has broken with the dualistic division into mind and body and united them in an interpretation of sensory perception and recognition as closely connected:

"Everything I know about the world, even my scientific understanding, I know because of my personal experience, an experience of the world without which the symbols of science would have nothing to say to me" (M. Merleau-Ponty in T. H. Rasmussen, 2011; p. 3).

However — if all our knowledge of the world is thus basically due to sensory experience and recognition processes, the consequence of an interpretation of aesthetics as sensory recognition would be that all knowledge is aesthetic. We do not find an interpretation of aesthetics that is so broad useful.

To associate the aesthetic, sensory experience with the production and reception of expressive artistic forms, as suggested by Aristotle, represents however a particular demarcation which we will unpack in the following section. Defining the aesthetic by the quality of experience, in our view, delivers a similar operationalization

problem. Firstly any qualitative experience is inevitably subjective. Secondly the experience's parameters are very broadly formulated and may, according to Fink-Jensen and Nielsen, include experience of other accessible sensory objects. This means that the aesthetic actually represents an attitude to an object, and not simply the object itself, an attitude which includes all life's experiences. The Danish philosopher *Søren Kierkegaard* distanced himself from this viewpoint which he, from the ethical premises of his time, regarded as a superficial view of the place of aesthetics in life. Our own viewpoint is more pragmatic; such an individualized aesthetic understanding is not adequate in the educational context.

"Beauty" is also problematic as a concept. In a late modern society, characterized by cultural liberation, where there is no consensus regarding the understanding of the beautiful (or regarding the good and the true, for that matter), and where art itself has broken all limits regarding the classical concept of beauty, the definition of aesthetics as "the school of beauty" also seems inadequate.

3. New Reference Points

In our efforts to define an aesthetics concept that is not based upon religion, special views on sensory perception and individual taste preferences, we turn towards the last two decades' suggestion for an interpretation of the art-based subjects as essential, inalienable learning and recognition paths, where their own work with aesthetic modes of expression provide the participants with the opportunity of not only developing professional skills, but also of acquiring a special sort of knowledge:

"The aesthetic recognition for creator and observer is characterized by the experience of understanding; an entirety of emotionality and rationality" (B. K. Rasmussen and P. Wright, 2001; p. 2).

"Aesthetic practice can be a knowledge process, in the proper sense of the word a way of understanding reality" (B. D. Austring and M. Sørensen, 2011; p. 91).

"Thus, aesthetics represent a qualitative world view, giving life meaning and entirety" (H. Hohr, 1998; p. 4).

In this interpretation, the concept of aesthetics refers to the special symbolic language that we use when working with artistic forms of expression in a wide sense. Here, aesthetics are associated with the symbolic form, as it appears in role playing, rituals, everyday aesthetics and in the many types of art. It is an issue of symbolic communication where conscious understanding results from understanding though the senses.

Furthermore, it is characteristic of the aesthetic expression that it is man-made and with (conscious or unconscious) communication intents in view. It can be a small child's role playing, where the child processes its impressions and expresses itself through the form of the play. It can be a painting or a piece of music through which the artist attempts to express himself and communicate the way he experiences the world. René Magritte's famous painting of a pipe with the text *"Ceci n'est pas une pipe"* is quite truly not a pipe, but an artist's aesthetic, symbolic form expression of his own experience of and experience with pipes:

"The sensed symbol is a culturally determined reconstruction of an actual interaction's sensory structure" (H. Hohr, 1998; p. 5).

The symbolic mode of expression has as a special characteristic that it has been created with the intent to be experienced sensorial, i.e., with all of the human sensory potential as resonance. Finally, it is a fundamental feature of this interpretation of aesthetics that the whole aesthetic mode of expression contains a subjective interpretation of the world that is able to communicate about feelings in particular, and is potentially able to express the unspeakable.

In Puccini's opera La Boheme, Rodolfo sings a part at the death bed of his beloved Mimi which is perceived sensuously, primarily through the ear, and which expresses strong feelings in a way that touches you emotionally. At one and the same time, the song communicates something about the complex relationship between love, sorrow and longing and about how the emotions feel — all statements that it would be impossible to describe sufficiently solely through the spoken language. The same applies to children's own games and musical modes of expression, where they through aesthetic activity engage in interpreting and communicating about their feelings and experiences.

In this interpretation, aesthetics as a whole can be defined in the following way:

"Aesthetics are a sensuous symbolic form that contains an interpretation of ourselves and the world and which is particularly capable of communicating from, to and about emotions" (B. D. Austring and M. Sørensen, 2011; p. 68).

3.1 Culture > Aesthetics > Art (Figure 1)

We make a distinction between aesthetics and art. This illustration shows art as a part of the aesthetics and aesthetics as a part of culture. From this point of view art represents the avant-garde and the mastery of aesthetic expressions. In other words: Not all of the culture is aesthetic and not all of the aesthetics is art.

That part of aesthetics which is not art is found in the everyday, where fashion, interior design and so on is often an aesthetic expression of who we are or would like to be. Today in Scandinavia, the aesthetic concept gains ever wider influence precisely because it can include expressive form practiced in the training and everyday practice of teachers on any level of education, to a greater extent than art.

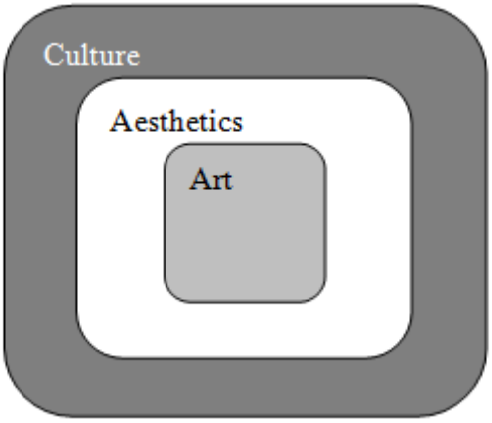


Figure 1 The Relation Between Culture, The Aesthetics And Art

3.2 A Social Scientific Approach

In order to illustrate how and why people use aesthetic learning processes, we will initially turn our eyes towards a socialization theory by *Hansjörg Hohr* (1998), Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

According to Hohr, when a person is socialized, he also gains an understanding of himself and the world through three different, but mutually dependent, learning methods. These learning methods are founded in various human stages of development, but once they have been established, they work together. Hohr's socialization theory is inspired by critical pedagogy (e.g., Alfred Lorenzer), and he sees the socialization process as a dialectical process between a society's culture on the one side and the active subject on the other side. Culture asserts itself communicatively in language, contact forms, rituals and aesthetics. This means that each society always has its

own cultural and aesthetic modes of expression, which its citizens use to communicate. For example, Danish music sounds different from Chinese music. The cultural coding of the aesthetic mode of expression takes place in the socialization process.

With Hohr's way of thinking as our starting point, we have developed the following model for man's three learning methods. Basic empirical learning is developed in the infancy; aesthetic learning is developed in the early childhood years, while discursive learning is the final method of learning that we start using as part of our socialization (Figure 2).

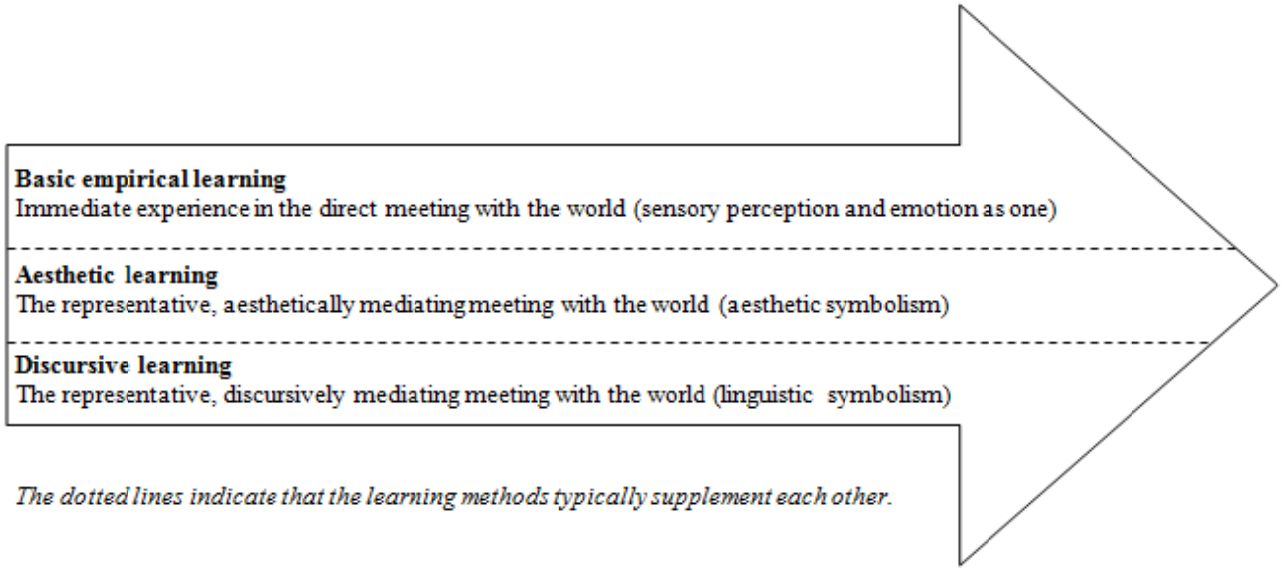


Figure 2 The Three Learning Methods

Even though an order of the learning methods above has been stated, this does not entail development-psychological phase thinking or a significance hierarchy. Each learning method has its own special and necessary function. The movement from basic empirical learning to discursive learning is a movement in the direction of emotional down toning, generalization, objectivity and abstraction.

The aesthetic learning method is pivotal, as it maintains important impulses from basic empirical learning (sensory perception and emotion) and is available as an equally faceted, holistic and expressive alternative or supplement to the conventional, discursive learning method.

In the following, we will examine these mutually dependent learning methods further:

3.2.1 Basic Empirical Learning

Basic empirical learning, sensing and experiencing the world immediately, is man's first, basic and most comprehensive learning method. With regard to this learning method, the aim is to explore the world with your body and senses in a direct meeting with the world. Thus, this is a pre-symbolic mode of experience. The child feels and senses the world, i.e., it senses, perceives and acquires the surrounding offers and expectations, but it is not shaped passively, as the child from the first moment actively interacts with and enters into dialogue with its surroundings.

For example, if we look at a child that is given a drum, this child will gather basic empirical knowledge about the drum through bodily and sensorial experiments. The child might examine the shape of the drum, its tactile quality, taste, smell, size, weight, volume, load capacity, its ability to roll and its phonetic qualities. The child will

not play the instrument yet, understood as consciously attempting to express something specific, but will simply examine what a drum is and what it can be used for. In this experimental meeting with the world, the child will create an understanding, which according to Piaget's adaption concept is stored in experience structures in the brain. But this experience formation is not neutral, as man always associates an emotion with the sensed experience. One child might associate experiences of warm water with emotions such as joy and pleasure, while another child might associate it with discomfort.

Single perceptions become experiences through repetitions. What drives the process forward is the interaction offers that the child meets on the one side and the child's instincts, needs and existential desire to excel in life on the other side. Instinct, sensory perception and cognition are all included in the term basic empirical learning, which constitutes man's pre-symbolic learning method.

The basic empirical learning as a learning method takes place in a span between the child's development instinct on the one side and the cultural interaction offers that the child meets on the other side:

3.2.2 Aesthetic Learning

The aesthetic learning method is a learning method that follows throughout our lives. It builds on the primary, empirical experiences, which it does not replace, though. The core of this learning method is that the child's pre-symbolic experiences link with the aesthetic form offers of the surrounding world in dialectic interaction, and that it acquires the world in this way through symbolic interaction. Thus, with regard to this learning method, the aim is to transform impressions into expressions through an aesthetic medium (music, drama, play, drawing, storytelling etc.), and in this way get the opportunity to process experiences and communicate with oneself and ones surrounding world at one and the same time.

Something special about this learning method is that it is representative, which means that it is characterized by the fact that you use symbolic expressions as representation for a perception, an experience, an emotion or an object. This can take place through art's many and diverse symbolic languages, but also through the aesthetic symbolism of everyday life, through which we express ourselves and our view of the world, for example through our choice of car, clothes, interior decoration etc.

In the capacity of this learning method, the child with the drum will playfully attempt to create a specific expression through rhythm, dynamics, tones and notes. Thus, the child improvises its way to its own music composition in interaction with its surroundings. It uses the musical form activity as a medium for processing, expressing and communicating its impressions, experiences and emotions.

The form activities that find their expression in aesthetic, symbolic mediation are characterized by relational complexity. The relational can for example be the theatre's many different effects (light, sound, make-up, bodily actions, linguistic actions, stage images etc.) working together in one expression, or music's many single notes that create processes and entireties in relation to each other. One note is not music, and a solitary smoke machine does not create theatre. The single components do not generate meaning, and therefore, they cannot be 'translated' into other expressions in the same way as words can be translated into other words. The same form symbol can enter into very different expressions. Thus, the note A can be used in all kinds of different musical expressions. As the aesthetic form symbols do not have a fixed meaning, the symbolic expression arises through the relational complexity of the single components. Thus, aesthetic activity is primarily holistic.

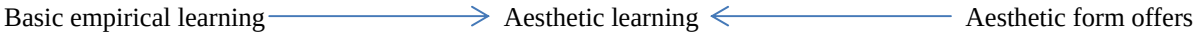
Obviously, not everything that is expressed aesthetically through singing, dancing and drama, for instance, is necessarily an expression of the child's own concrete sensory experiences and emotions. Before the child masters

its form expression, it will create a number of form experiments that gradually establish the desired synthesis between the structural form offers of the surrounding world and the subject's more or less structured experiences. If the synthesis succeeds, the child has experienced a holistic experience of the world that it can express on a symbolic level. In principle, this process is never-ending.

According to Hohr, a special significant feature of the aesthetic activity is that you can use it to express the unspeakable. The unspeakable can be thoughts and knowledge that you are not capable of putting into words and thus capture in discursive language. This primarily includes the subjective, emotions and sensory experiences. For example, this can be experiences that to the subject itself appear silent, unclear and fragmented, and topics such as hate or love, whose complexity and emotional meaning can only be captured roughly and insufficiently in discursive phrasing. Through the aesthetic mediation of the unspeakable, we thus become able to reflect on and communicate about the things we would not otherwise be able to speak of.

Thus, aesthetic activity can include a number of special recognition-related potentials. First of all, the actual creating activity where you transform impressions of the world into sensuous symbolic form includes a reflection process that makes it possible for us to process our experiences and communicate about the complex as well as the unspeakable. Second of all, throughout the process and in connection with the continuous communication, you will through the form be able to mirror yourself and your understanding of the world partly in the societally defined cultural forms and partly in co-actors' aesthetic expressions and finally in the response you get from your surroundings to your aesthetic expressions. In this way, the aesthetic learning method gives us a completely necessary and irreplaceable approach to the world.

The aesthetic learning method takes place in a span between basic empirical learning on the one side and the aesthetic form and mediation offers that the child meets on the other side:



3.2.3 Discursive Learning

Discursive learning builds on basic empirical learning and aesthetic learning, yet without replacing them. This type of experience is a conscious process that first deconstructs and then reconstructs the world at an abstract level and manifests itself as a conceptual framework. This learning method is primarily associated with language (lectures, books, articles) or with special symbolic systems, such as the mathematical symbols and the note system of music.

The discursive is a term borrowed from SusanneK. Langer’s linguistic philosophy. It describes a language that forms expressions about the world, expressions characterized by causal relation, logic and chronology with a specific field or domain (a discourse). The discursive learning method is developed as the child gradually associates its experiences and emotions with the conventional, abstract meanings of the linguistic system, where a specific shaking in the muscles, for example, can be fixed in the graphic characters “to freeze”, or at a concept level in “cold”.

Contrary to the aesthetic form systems, linguistic symbols are relatively stable in their meaning, relatively independent of context and lexical. The latter means that a word can be fully or partially explained and defined using other words. That they are independent of context means that a letter, a number or a note always refers to the same unit (sound, quantity, note), regardless of the context it enters into. 2 + 2 is always 4, no matter if it refers to time or thermos bottles.

With regard to the child's experiments with the drum, it will with the discursive learning method not have to work expressively musically, but instead relate to music theory and notation through abstract mental processes.

Aesthetic form systems such as music, painting, theatre and dancing may very well include linguistic codes, but if so, they form a synthesis with the aesthetic form codes and thus comply with aesthetic rules for meaning. However, they have in common with discursive language that they are symbolic communication systems. Language's phonetic, semantic, grammatical and syntactic rules correspond to the aesthetic form systems' rules for sound, rhythm, style and composition.

Language can also be aesthetic (poems, novels etc.). Thus, it is important to differentiate between the discursive and aesthetic sides of spoken and written language. Language is discursive when it attempts to mediate non-symbolic, factual expressions, while it is aesthetic when style, sound, rhythm and composition (genre) play an active part in the production of meaning, as is the case with poems, lyrics and other artistic linguistic usage.

The discursive learning method takes place in a span between aesthetic learning on the one side and the discursive form and interaction offers that the child meets on the other side:

Aesthetic learning ⟶ Discursive learning ⟵ Discursive form offers

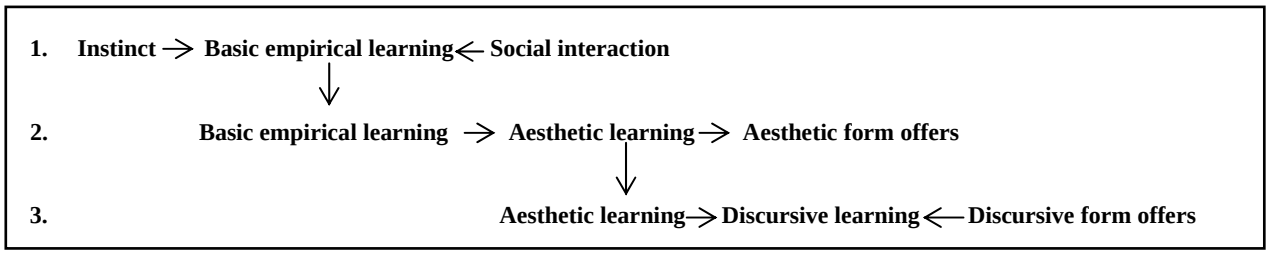


Figure 3 Complete Model of Socialization and Learning Based on Hansjörg Hohr

3.3 A Psychological Approach

The English psychologist *Donald W. Winnicott* provides a suggestion to why we humans concern ourselves with aesthetic activities. According to Winnicott, man is basically anchored in an inner, subjective world and surrounded by an outer, objective world. Between these "worlds", Winnicott introduces a third world, the world of play and art, the potential space. What is special about the potential space is that it is an oasis in which we can creatively share our inner subjective experiences and develop an understanding of ourselves, the others and the world that we are all a part of.

This potential space (Figure 4) is culturally and socially defined, as it is developed in interaction with the child's close caregivers right from the beginning. It is established through the child expressing its inner world in interaction with its close caregivers through the aesthetic symbolic language of play, with the outer world as context. In order to develop creativity optimally in the potential space, it is important that the meeting between the inner and the outer world takes place in an atmosphere without negative consequences. Thus, mistakes are seen as an important part of the developmental process in this connection. A successful meeting between subject and society is characterized by the subject managing to retain and process experiences from his inner world in symbolic form and thus developing not only his "self" (his identity), but also an understanding of others and of the surrounding world.

The arrows in the model above indicate the meeting between the child's inner world and the outer world in the potential space of play and aesthetics. The potential space is the place where aesthetic learning takes place. Even though the child's development in the potential space is relationally determined as a rule, it is not a biological, but rather a cultural space, where the society's interaction offers meet the child's needs. The driving force of the child's development potential is its need to be able to interact optimally with the surrounding world, to

be able to handle life.

The potential space is not reserved for the small child, but accompanies us through our whole lives. It is in this universe of symbolic play that all creative activities are founded. Thus, play and the aesthetic expressions becomes an arena for development of experiences that help the individual establish himself in a balance between the inner and the outer world. Winnicott himself describes the strength of the potential space in the following way:

"The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society, depends on experience that leads to trust. It can be characterized as something sacred to the individual, as this is where the individual experiences its creative force" (B. D. Austring and M. Sørensen, 2011; p. 110).

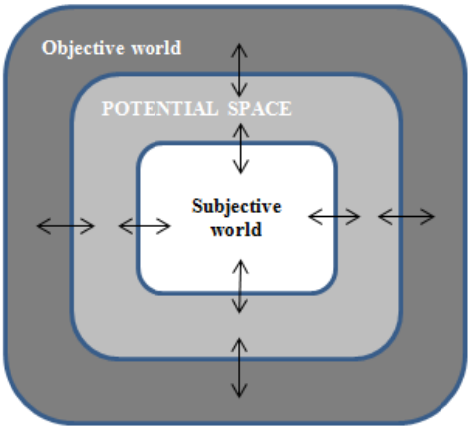


Figure 4 The Potential Space

3.4 A Philosophical Approach

According to the Danish philosopher *Mogens Pahuus*, aesthetics are an essential and vital part of being human. Pahuus sees man as basically motivated partly by biological and social needs, so-called deficit needs, which have in common that they are initiated by a deficit and satisfied when the deficit situation has been ceased, and controlled partly by existential needs, which are in principle never-ending. He calls the existential needs the urge for life. The urge for life is associated with the actual feeling of being alive, and it is, among other things, stimulated by man's aesthetic activities as we meet them in the shape of play, art and creative activities. When we express ourselves playfully, aesthetically and artistically, we become visible to ourselves and each other. We realize ourselves when we feel and express that we are alive, and through our expression, we "narrate" ourselves into place in the world. The satisfaction of the existential needs stimulates the actual zest for life, through which "the good life" can be realized.

In this connection, aesthetic activities have a special value, as experiencing and expressing yourself aesthetically strengthens the zest for life and joy of life of the individual. However, the attainment of aesthetic perceptions and experience is conditional on the subject's own ability to open up to the impressions offered by aesthetic activities. Mogens Pahuus, inspired by another Danish philosopher and theologian Knud E. Løgstrup, calls this special state of susceptibility "stemthed" which means "the state of being in tune".

"The fact that the child experiences with all of itself, committed, involved, absorbed, captivated, means that when it experiences something, it is always moved, concerned, affected by what it meets in a specific way; and it is this type of bodily anchored emotionality I call stemthed" (M. Pahuus, 1995; p. 162).

Thus, the state of being in tune characterizes man's committed, completely open and unconditional meeting with the world — a near optimal basis for learning. This "experience when meeting the world" is a

phenomenological type of learning and experiencing that directly requires emotional involvement. In this way Pahuus emphasizes that we perceive through dialectics where we act and affect things on the one side and are personally being affected by things on the other side, i.e., being moved by them and receiving impressions from them. In this connection, emotion does not block perception. Subjectivity does not reduce objectivity; on the contrary, they complement each other.

Mogens Pahuus divides human development into intellectual and bodily-emotional development. This division entails that pedagogy that enables “stemthed” must correspondingly be divided in two. He believes that the drives associated with the basic (deficit) needs are best met through a rationally based control of the intellectual development. However, the existential needs are satisfied through bodily-emotional initiatives, such as aesthetic activities. Pahuus points out that the two types of learning and experiencing supplement and complete each other, but that we, with the prevalent education thinking, which increasingly prioritizes the discursive, “academic” ways of learning, create imbalance in the human personality development.

4. The Special Potentialsof the Aesthetic Learning Processes

We have now described the learning potential of aesthetics through a kind of triangulation of three different points of view, a social scientifical, a psychological and a philosophical one. Obviously, there are other interesting angles, and it will always be possible to demonstrate scientific theoretical problems when so different scientific approaches are referred to as here. Therefore, we do not claim that this article contains any “truth”. Each era has its own truth, different cultures have different truths, and each domain in the Niklas Luhmann sense has its own truth. As authors, we will probably not get closer to the truth than by professing to our backgrounds: A globalized, culturally liberated, late modern era, a Scandinavian view of culture and humanity and profound commitment to the art-based approach to learning in the education system, where we both teach the subject Drama in Denmark. Nonetheless, we believe that we, on the basis of the theories referred to and their mutual analogy, have solid substance for the following comprehensive description of the special potential of aesthetic learning processes:

The individual is a product of as well as a co-creator of culture. It experiences the world and also characterizes it. To be able to handle the modern reality with all its breaches, stagings and paradoxes requires skills along the lines of decoding, analysis, assessment, knowledge of many different modes of expression and holistic approaches, in brief skills that occur naturally in connection with aesthetic activities. When working with aesthetic activities, the individual processes his own experiences as well as the cultural and social actions of other people. Thus, with regard to music, you can learn at least four things within the same learning process:

- Something about culture and society in relation to music, for instance about the use and significance of music, about the conditions for enjoying, learning and making music, about its significance for various sub-cultures etc.
- Something about the music medium, about the actual piece of music as well as about the instruments, the genres of music, music history, sound, music as entertainment, protest, therapy etc.
- Something about yourself and about the other participants of the process, the fellow players.
- Something about the social rules, within interaction as well as within the rehearsing process, publication etc.

As we have seen, man can express and communicate experiences through aesthetic activities that cannot be expressed and conveyed as well and as precisely through discursive expressions. Music, theatre etc. can express the unspeakable, and in this way, it becomes possible to process and communicate about the conscious as well as the more unconscious experiences and thereby achieve new knowledge.

As the aesthetic learning process is always relational and developed in interaction with the surrounding culture, the players in the aesthetic activities can develop cultural identity and social skills. Add to this that the individual can share its inner world with others through aesthetic activities in the potential space and in this way create balance between its inner and outer world, realize itself and develop individual and collective identity. Last but not least aesthetic activities strengthen the joy of life, and they are an arena for development of imagination and creativity — society's most important resources.

Finally, we would like to sum up our efforts to describe the learning potential of aesthetics with this definition of an aesthetic learning process:

"An aesthetic learning process is a learning method where you transform you impressions of the world into aesthetic form expressions through aesthetic mediation in order to be able to reflect on and communicate about yourself and the world" (B. D. Austring and M. Sørensen, 2011; p. 106).

5. Conclusion

Our research incontemporary social, philosophical and psychological science points out that aesthetic learning as in art education involves a rather large scale of learning potentials:

Knowledge of art and the aesthetics	Individual and collective identity
Media literacy	Ability to handle complexity
Artistic skills	Social skills
Human personality development	Communication skills
Ability of abstract thinking	Mental balance
Cultural identity	Entirety of emotionality and rationality
Ability to express the unspeakable	Imagination and creativity resources
A qualitative world view giving life meaning and entirety	Zest for and joy of life

If art based education ever needed legitimation — here it is! Still, all over Europe and Scandinavia you see a clear tendency towards less art education and more focus on mathematics, physics and natural sciences in order to increase innovation and economic growth. You might say that we prioritize the fruits at the expense of the fruit tree…However, we experience new tendencies in the work of science described in this article that is in line with e.g., the inspiring work of *Anne Bamford*, University of Arts London, and *James Catteral*, University of California. — Who's next?

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