Innovative Pedagogy
A Recognition of Emotions and Creativity in Education

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The main purpose of this book is to take a closer look at how students and teachers in educational institutions apply the innovative, the playful and the emotional and creative dimensions of learning. With this contribution, the authors aim at reaching an international audience of educators at several levels, including primary and secondary schools, higher and adult education, university colleges, graduate, undergraduate and PhD schools. Driven by the common interest of the authors to reflect on emotions in education, the chapters in this book encompass multiple perspectives: the socio-cultural perspective that looks at interactions among individuals; the creation and recreation of the self and others; and the study of collaboration, change processes and aesthetic and creative learning. This anthology offers original empirical documentation and theoretical reflections on how pedagogical and educational changes might challenge or facilitate learning for students and educators. Besides its relevance within the education sector, the content presented here can be applied in non-formal learning environments, such as museums, cultural institutions, as well as other educational settings where emotions are largely stimulated and cultivated.
Innovative Pedagogy
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Scope

The knowledge, learning and creative economies manifest the changing significance of intellectual capital and the thickening connections between economic growth, knowledge and creativity. Increasingly economic and social activity is comprised by the 'symbolic' or 'weightless' economy with its iconic, immaterial and digital goods. This new digital knowledge economy includes new international labor that rely on developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) that are changing the format, density and nature of the exchange and flows of knowledge, research and scholarship. Delivery modes in education are being reshaped. New global cultures of knowledge and research networks are spreading rapidly. New forms of openness and networking, cross-border people movement, flows of capital, portal cities and intensive development zones all are changing the conditions of imagining and producing and the sharing of creative work in different spheres. At the centre of is the economy/creativity nexus. But are education systems, institutions, assumptions and habits positioned and able so as to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges? This new series investigates all the aspects of education in (and as) the creative economy in order to extend the dialogue about the relationship between contemporary higher education and the changing face of contemporary economies.
Innovative Pedagogy

A Recognition of Emotions and Creativity in Education

Edited by

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EMOTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

Introduction

This is our second book in the series Creative Education. In the first one, Dealing with Emotions: A Pedagogical Challenge to Innovative Learning, we reflected on emotions and education from multiple perspectives: the socio-cultural perspective that looks at interactions among individuals, the creation and recreation of the self and others, the study of collaboration, change processes (transformative learning) and aesthetic and creative learning in order to reflect on students’ and educators’ emotional responses. Like this edition, it offered empirical documentation and theoretical reflections on how pedagogical and educational changes might challenge or facilitate learning for students and educators.

PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION AND EMOTIONS IN EDUCATION

An overarching theme of this book is our interest in taking a close look at how students and teachers in educational institutions apply the innovative, the playful and the emotional and creative dimensions of learning.

On the one hand, we are interested in these dimensions in order to improve our understanding of how they interplay with the depth and the quality of learning processes, as they present a new ground for students and teachers to experiment with the construction of knowledge, ways of assessing teaching, learning and research.

On the other hand, we want to look at how creative, emotional and innovative potentials in education are affected by current societal changes and demands. As university researchers, we are part of an educational system in which we recognise an increasing political demand for innovation and creativity as an outcome of education. An EU report defines creativity and innovation as a necessity and a skill that can be taught:

Creativity and innovation in education are not just an opportunity, but a necessity. This work highlights an inclusive and democratic perspective of creativity, which sees all people as capable of being creative from early childhood. However, whether people develop their creativity depends on the kind of training they receive. Accordingly, creativity should be understood as a skill which may be developed through creative learning and innovative teaching. (Ferrari et al., 2009, p. 47)
In addition to this demand for “teaching of innovative and creative skills”, international comparisons of educational outcomes (such as the Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA) are on the political agenda, which indicates a contemporary economic, outcome-focused ideology in education, intending to rank countries, schools and classes, which influence students’ learning environment. Put briefly, students – as well as teachers – are expected to be innovative and creative and produce measurable learning outcomes.

Interestingly, the idea of viewing education as a societal field, where creation of ideas takes place and social change might be fostered, is not new. About a hundred years ago, John Dewey (1988) regarded education as part of progress, depending on whether or not it can nurture the originality of mental attitudes in people:

As I have referred to the young as evidence that a certain originality of mental attitude is a spontaneous trait of human individuals, so I must now refer to education as one great force that may either preserve or propagate this attitude or that may slowly and surely choke it. Education is one of the great opportunities for present day pioneering. (Dewey, 1988, p. 131)

Education can be looked at as a process that influences students’ attitudes, understanding and belief systems, which in turn affect their actions. The process of education therefore holds the potential to influence the foundation for social and ethical judgment, thereby preparing students for life in a democratic world. Hence, the educational process plays a meaningful role, as it can determine whether or not our students become citizens who are able to think for themselves and dare to do things “differently”, to think and act “outside the box” and to express original thoughts and ideas. In this sense, education also deals with “self-creation” which includes both cognitive aspects (knowledge, understanding and beliefs) and actions.

When creativity and innovation become a demand for education, it might be assumed that it is enough to change the curricula of school subjects, in order to improve students’ “skills”. This approach may overlook, however, the fact that emotions and feelings play an essential role in learning and knowledge creation. Emotions refer to the self and hence provide us with a means for developing self-knowledge. If we consider emotions as an integral part of how we interpret and make sense of events, then they consequently affect whether or not we maintain or change our current practice. For example, emotions might be signalling reward and trigger curiosity and playfulness, or they might make us feel uncomfortable (or puzzled) and give us an incentive to reconsider what we do. In other words, emotions influence what we learn and how – and consequently direct our acting and thinking. They relate to students’ success and failure and to how they think about themselves as learners and individuals.

In the educational context, emotions can foster or discourage not only learning, but also creativity and the sense of courage and curiosity needed for students to try out something new. If we see emotions as inseparable from learning, it becomes relevant
EMOTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

to actively integrate and consciously address the emotional dimension in education. Teaching and learning processes must consequently balance different emotions, playfully wild, uncontrollable processes of idea generation, as well as rituals, traditions, histories, social interaction and other already valued understandings of development, learning and knowledge.

Emotions control the students’ attention, influence their motivation to learn, modify the choice of learning strategies, and affect their self-regulation of learning. Furthermore, emotions are part of students’ identity, and they affect personality development, psychological health and physical health. From an educational perspective, emotions are important because of their influence on learning and development, but students’ emotional well-being should also be regarded as an educational goal that is important in itself. (Pekrun, 2014, p. 6)

In this book, we take a particular interest in emotions linked to creativity and in that respect we emphasize the crucial importance of emotions in the design of innovative learning processes and education in general.

THE AUTHORS, THEIR BACKGROUND AND THEIR CO-CREATION

The authors of this book are all members of the research group FIU (Danish acronym for Research in Education and Cultures of Learning). Our main scientific focus is on the study of education and teaching at a micro and macro level, in all stages of the educational system. At a micro level, we look at the interaction, communication, relations and teaching cultures that are manifested in processes of teaching and learning. Another aim is to grasp the relationship between the micro and macro levels of teaching and to study the multiple socio-cultural conditions for pedagogical innovation.

We make use of mainly qualitative methods, such as ethnographic studies and action research, which allow linking of research and development, as well as designing and documenting concrete changes in teaching and education. However, quantitative studies are also valued and welcomed, as the present volume testifies. Research projects that are carried out within FIU focus on teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools, high schools, in post-secondary education and universities and within professional development at Teachers’ Colleges with specific attention to creativity and innovation in these contexts. The projects’ purpose is building and extending knowledge about existing teaching cultures or future developments in education, through the description and development of pedagogical strategies, both in theory and in practice.

Currently, the group covers areas such as: innovative educational design; creativity in the classroom; arts integration in curriculum and non-formal learning environments; evaluation and assessment in primary schools; problem-based and project-organised work in high schools; building of study cultures in university education and adult education.
The scholarly affiliation of the group is Aalborg University, Denmark. Aalborg University numbers 20,000 students and has been working with and developing problem-oriented, project-based education since it was established in 1974. Rather than communicating knowledge to students, we as educators support the collaborative process of knowledge-creation and knowledge-development within student groups. Students work in faculty-supervised groups, planning, managing and completing a project, which addresses an independently and originally formulated problem. Problem-based learning, projects and group structures form the learning model at Aalborg University (Krogh & Aarup Jensen, 2013; Lund & Aarup Jensen, 2013). The model stimulates continuous curiosity among educators, whose role is to facilitate and support students’ creativity and initiatives. To support students while they are exploring the world around them implies to a high degree dealing with students’ and own emotions when learning and teaching. This is the reason why writing the present contribution was a deep-felt need in the research group and part of an on-going and long-term theoretical and practice-oriented work.

THE GENESIS OF THE BOOK

Like our previous contribution, this anthology, too, is the product of a thematic effort within our research group whose members have been working together for a long period of time. It is a collaborative and a dialogic-based work. Within the authors’ team we worked individually when writing the various chapters, but also very much collectively, giving each other advice, challenges, inspiration and internal peer review. Our team work has been strengthened by our regular research-group meetings, where we developed content-related, methodological or procedural discussions on educational dilemmas. For this reason, although the book form is an anthology, we perceive the final product as a collective work – a second FIU footprint in the scholarly sand.

During the process of writing this anthology, we organised a Creative University Conference within the International Creative University Network (ICUN), titled: Knowledge Cultures, Critical Creative Thinking and Innovative Learning Processes (Aalborg University, 18–19 August 2016, Aalborg, Denmark). The internationally diverse group of participants indicated a growing world-wide interest in teaching methods and pedagogies that develop students’ innovative and creative thinking, where students as well as teachers are expected to break with habitual actions and thoughts. We invited contributions that investigate philosophical, cultural, social and pedagogical aspects of education to extend the dialogues between playful, creative learning processes and the contemporary concerns in society and the wider world.

Our anthology is part of this continuing dialogue, as we recognise societal changes and the call for new ways to conceptualise address and enact education and research within education.

Within the author group, we attempted to live up to our socio-cultural scientific perspective, making mutual sharing a fundamental structure of our work. As Aarup Jensen explains, “a key point in the socio-cultural activity theory is that
communication and interaction between people is essential in all learning processes, and it is through communication that socio-cultural resources are created” (2015, p. 63). To a great extent, the present contribution bears witness to the group’s learning process.

THE BOOK STRUCTURE

The book is framed by this introduction and a final conclusion, pointing out what we have learned and which new perspectives we gained during the process of composing this second edition. We also suggest directions and focus points for further research in this field. The seven chapters of this anthology are summarised here:

In the first chapter, Tatiana Chemi discusses a hot topic within the field of arts consumption, with several consequences for learning and development: does participation in artistic experiences stimulate positive emotions? If so, how does this happen? Are emotions in art experiences charged with learning outputs? The author discusses the complexity of this topic by elaborating on the metaphor of the arts as safe haven. This reflection is mostly conceptual but as empirical support Chemi brings examples from a research study on artistic creativity (2011–2014), and on artist/school partnerships (2016–2017). Findings focus on the emotional side of art-making and its learning potential. The author proposes a conceptual interpretation of the arts as a safe haven for learning experiences.

In Chapter 2, Sarah Grams Davy attempts to link two previously unconnected research fields. How can findings on teacher well-being and classroom emotional climate inspire research in teaching for creativity? In reviewing findings from both areas, she illustrates the meaningful role of teachers’ well-being for students’ creativity, by focusing on the two concepts of “micromoments in teaching” and “students’ creativity-related self-image”. Teacher uncertainty and teacher well-being are pointed out as relevant factors to be considered when aiming to improve creativity in students. Implications for school practice are discussed.

In the third chapter, Julie Borup Jensen analyses an action research-based study, applying arts-based pedagogies and methods in social education studies at a Danish university college. The project in focus deals with a common challenge – that students find it difficult to participate in the ever more theory-oriented academic environment of the institutions for social education studies. Taking a socio-cultural perspective on cultural production, the author investigates how the arts can offer ways to express, contain and process students’ emotions in innovative identity-building processes. In offering different ways to express individual and collective knowledge, values, attitudes, interpretations and experiences and emotions, the collective production of arts seems to enable democratic, personalised opportunities for professional self-reflection and identity development in students.

In Chapter 4, Annie Aarup Jensen studies why it may be difficult for some university students to distinguish between subject-related, academic reasons and arguments on the one hand, and personal and value-laden attitudes and opinions
connected with emotions on the other hand. Drawing on socio-constructivism and culture theory, this problem will be analysed through a specific case: a module in a master’s program on learning seems to invite students to present emotional rather than academic arguments for their treatment of the subject in question. The arguments presented may be both personal and private, such as feelings regarding the subject area, reluctance to enter into reflection processes deemed necessary for doing the task, or a lack of interest in the subject.

In the fifth chapter, *Assessment of Students – a Look at Validity in Emotional Situations*, Lone Krogh sheds light on the different perspectives affecting situations where students are being assessed and which may therefore play an important role in the result. Questions are raised, such as: Why do we assess? What can we assess? And what is difficult to assess? Challenges and ways to talk about assessment are analysed. Finally, problems with validity and reliability and, not least, student perspectives, including their backgrounds and the emotional aspects which play an important role, are included in the discussion. Current challenges regarding forms of assessment appear to be related to societal expectations of students’ competencies after graduation.

In Chapter 6, Birthe Lund analyses the general educational aims and conditions for forming or cultivating “the innovative student”, taking as point of departure the new learning goals in Danish Schools. The hypothesis is that the subject (the student) in this educational process risks becoming an “object” of political and educational goals, reflected in general and economics-biased concepts of what being “entrepreneurial and innovative” means. The chapter discusses the pedagogical consequences for students’ self-cultivation, emancipation, subjectification and democratic Bildung, when such educational and political goals deliberately influence students’ will and their ability to act. This formation process takes place in order to prepare students for a working life in – what is expected to be – an international, competitive, knowledge society, but it might neglect the importance of democratic Bildung, which ought to take place in schools.

In Chapter 7, Chunfang Zhou explores how playfulness influences creative climate from a perspective of emotionality. Based on socio-cultural theories, creativity is regarded as a situated-based activity. “Playfulness” is discussed as one of the main psychological characteristics influencing creative climate and “freedom” is introduced as being embedded in the nature of playfulness. As one of the relatively stable characteristics, playfulness is found to have some positive impact on academic achievement, working performance and creativity development. Therefore, this chapter suggests that in order to develop a creative classroom climate in education, students should acquire more learning experience with playfulness through pedagogical design.

**TARGET GROUP**

With this book we aim to reach an international audience of educators at several levels, including primary and secondary schools, higher and adult education,
university colleges, graduate, undergraduate and PhD schools. We also imagine possible applications of the content in non-formal learning environments, such as museums, cultural institutions and the like, that is educational settings where the emotions are largely stimulated and cultivated in edutainment or experiential forms.

REFERENCES


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I FEEL GOOD

Making art feels good. This is a truth that does not need scientific proof (almost). Especially to those who have practiced or practice the making or the active appreciation of any kind of art at any kind of level. However, even though this experiential truth does not necessarily need scientific support for those experiencing it, educational policies and classroom strategies need more robust knowledge on the subject in order to carefully integrate the arts in education. Several studies confirm anecdotal evidence: participation in artistic experiences stimulates positive emotions (Hichem, 2015). In other words: It feels good.

This is a truth but also a stereotype. A myth verging on apologetics. In this chapter I will discuss the complexity of this topic by elaborating on the metaphor of the arts as safe haven. In which ways does art feel good? Are emotions in art experiences mostly positively charged? What is the connection between art-making and emotions? This reflection will be mostly conceptual but as empirical support I will bring examples from a research study on artistic creativity (2011–2014), where, in collaboration with colleagues from the research group ARiEL (Arts in Education and Learning), I collected professional artists’ narratives regarding the cognitive, emotional and relational elements of creative processes (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015). The methodological approach of this study was qualitative and based on retrospective narratives, collected by means of semi-structured interviews. The 22 artists interviewed (11 females, 11 males, average age 53.5, standard deviation 14.7σ) produced more than 23 interview hours divided over 18 interviews (some collaborating artists were interviewed in pairs). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, translated where necessary and analysed. In this study on artistic creativity all the artists agreed to be mentioned by name and even contributed to the texts’ internal validity by giving us feedback on content and formulations in their own transcribed interview. They covered a wide variety of art forms and genres: literature, poetry and scripts (Siri Hustvedt, Morten Ramsland, Michael Valeur); dance and choreography (Palle Granhøj); acting and theatre directing (Eugenio Barba, Julia Varley, Kirsten Dehlholm); music (Anders Koppel, Benjamin Koppel, Marco Nisticò, The Mira Quartet); film-making (Annette K. Olesen, Mary Jordan); visual arts (Michael Kvium, Julie Nord); digital arts (Signe Klejs, Niels Rønsholdt);
design (Rosan Bosch, Rune Fjord) and architecture (Inger Exner, Johannes Exner). The artists interviewed allowed me to look behind the scenes of their artistic creativity and to gather narratives on multiple aspects of the making of art. In the present chapter I will specifically address the findings that emphasise the emotional side of art-making and I will propose a conceptual interpretation of the arts as a safe haven for bold learning experiences. This point is fundamental to the argument of a possible transfer of learning from the arts to education or organisational learning. If optimal learning is conveyed through dynamics of positive emotions, regulation of feelings and positive functions of negative emotions (Charyton et al., 2009), then it is worth exploring the nature of emotions in artistic experiences. This chapter largely owes to this research study and at the same time is a reframing and rethinking of the findings already disseminated in Chemi, Jensen and Hersted (2015).

MANY WAYS OF PARTICIPATING IN ARTISTIC EXPERIENCES

When exploring the idea of arts as a safe haven, it is important to know that the logic or purpose of art is not necessarily to be uplifting or meant to evoke positive emotions – on the contrary, many artistic experiences are unlikely to be uplifting or inspire positive emotions at all. Artistic experiences or artworks are not necessarily created in order to be positive or uplifting. A classic example might be the plays of Irish dramatist Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) that make their audience feel uncomfortable, sad, puzzled, if not outright stupid and incompetent. Assisting to his play Waiting for Godot, audiences might experience a feeling of discomfort or anxiety when nothing happens twice, especially towards the end of the second act, when the characters repeat the same routines in a growing sense of seeming desperation and helplessness. They engage in all sorts of activities: they talk, they eat, they blame each other, they sleep, they fall down and they are waiting, but nothing decisive happens and they continue to wait. The point is that Godot –famously- never shows up and never will (Chemi, 2013). Art is not by definition positive at all, neither for the perceiver nor for the maker. Effects of artworks on recipients are described in several studies but one does not even need to engage in scientific discourses to find the above postulate true. The experience of art is not necessarily universally positive or universal in general. Artists are often “willing to venture into places that do not necessarily make life easier”, as Danish visual artist Michael Kvium tells in his interview (from now on, unreferenced quotes will draw from original empirical data). “Art doesn’t do that”, he goes on and then adds:

Those who are trying to make art into something that makes us better people or something like that – that’s something you can get in church, you cannot get it from art. Art might equally well make us much worse and much more unhappy, or at least make us aware that we are much more unhappy than we thought and make us aware that we are blinder than we thought, making us aware that we are very limited. And I think all artists are working against their own
limitations all the time, trying to figure out how do I exceed my limit? How can I fool this restriction? (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 130)

Kvium beautifully indicates the core of the relationship between art and emotions and he seems to protest against a specific form of instrumental use of art: the forceful bending of art towards positivity. I do not believe Kvium disagrees with the fact that art reception and making can inspire positive emotions, but I understand his complaint as a philosophical statement on the function and purpose of art. This function—or purpose—is not necessarily to generate or express positive feelings, because art can also be research, inquiry, and a venture into the unknown. Art does not oppose positivity, but it resists any kind of instrumental reduction to a single purpose. The quest into the unknown is more meaningful than any happy feeling can be. This gives rise to the question: how can the concept of positive emotions be used in the world of art and art perception? In what sense does art incite positive emotions without denying art’s brutal realism, as described by Kvium?

The ways in which individuals participate in and appreciate artistic experiences vary across cultures and historical periods. Variables that inform art appreciation are multiple and complex: gender, upbringing, status, values and many others. Like all emotional experiences, though, art experiences might contain some universal elements. This chapter will not review the complexity of the topic of artistic reception, but instead focus on one specific way of engaging with the arts. Rather than thinking of reception (or appreciation, or appraisal) as a passive activity as opposed to the active making of art, I wish to propose, inspired by Gardner (1994), that both experiences require an active participation in the arts, an active construction of meaning. Differing in the quality of experience, both perceiving and making art activate cognitive and emotional processes that are complex, engaging and challenging. At the same time, the challenges offered in artistic experiences can be perceived as safe and meaningful. I argue that the feeling of wellbeing might emerge from the optimal balance between challenges and safety that individuals might experience in the arts and from their metaphorical function.

A SAFE HAVEN

Let us continue to explore the idea of the arts as a safe haven, noting that the field of aesthetics has often emphasised the possible relationship between emotions and development. Gombrich (1959, p. 47), for instance, maintained that apparently negative emotions aroused in encounters with the arts can be beneficial to learning and growth, if they lead to e.g. catharsis (as in Aristotle’s philosophy) or psychological development (as in Freud’s psychoanalysis). Following a different scientific approach—namely semiotics, Eco maintains that both Freud and Aristotle hint at the fact that artistic experiences carry an implicit (positive) learning effect: “the metaphor is not only a means of delight but also, and above all, a tool of cognition” (Eco, 1984, p. 100). Eco’s approach does not deny biological processes
and his interpretation of semiotics is consistent with Gombrich’s psychology of art and most cognitivism, for instance in the statement that “making shortcuts within the process of semiosis is a neurological fact” (Eco, 1984, p. 129). Gombrich defines the formation of artistic judgment as thoughtful thinking, similarly to Perkins (1994): within the arts receivers are confronted with “riddles” to be cognitively understood by means of registration of differences (Gombrich, 1959). In a similar approach, Perkins (1994) identifies several cognitive outputs of arts experiences: wide-spectrum cognition, dispositional atmosphere, multi-connectedness. He then aligns these cognitive elements with bodily-sensory perceptions (sensory anchoring, instant access) and motivational elements (personal engagement). In other words, according to Perkins when human beings look at art activate different kinds of cognition, e.g. “visual processing, analytical thinking, posing questions, testing hypotheses, verbal reasoning” (Perkins, 1994, p. 5). This contributes building up dispositions to deep thinking and encouraging connection-making with personal and intimate issues and social, extrovert, universal themes. These perspectives seem to be consistent with Vygotsky’s non-dualistic perspective on education, which matches emotions and thinking as equally important tools leading to learning. The fundamental role of emotions for learning is in Vygotsky emphasised as a form of agency: “emotions have to be considered as a system of anticipatory reactions that inform the organism as to the near future of his behaviour and organize the different forms of his behaviour” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 106).

The fact that art experiences also involve a motivational level implies that works of art are made (conceived, designed and realised) to draw and hold attention, be it positive (e.g. sympathy, commotion, identification) or negative (e.g. anger, disgust, fear). The arts simply “invite and welcome sustained involvement” (Perkins, 1994, p. 83). The work of art is a witness to one’s reflection, always present here and now, as an anchor, or a reminder. For the experience of the receiver, it does not matter whether the work of art is the original or a reproduction of some sort (photographic or video) or a vivid memory, for instance in the case of performing arts. What is fundamental is that the artwork’s materiality is a tangible witness of intangible drives, such as meaningfulness, values, ideas, visions. Artworks are reminders of a given compositional process and of symbolic associations that are meaningful to the individual in a variety of patterns.

The senses of the receivers are activated and sharpened by the object observed, “you can [always] check something with a glance, point with a finger” (Perkins, 1994, p. 83) even in the ephemeral performing arts, where memory works as imprint. Being present at artworks as observer or maker –or as in Gardner (1994) as a participant, in the above perspectives, is always a positive act, rich in development and learning, no matter whether the experience or product has a positive or negative charge on perception. These perspectives conceptualise experiences in the arts as positive and full of learning potential, regardless of the value judgment involved in them, namely if receivers conceive them as good or bad. In other words, experiences in the arts that feel negative (for instance, feeling incapable of decoding enigmatic
A SAFE HAVEN FOR EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

artistic texts) do not necessarily bring negative cognitive and emotional effects, but might bring rich learning and development to the individual. The developmental potential of cognitive-emotional experiences is explained in Vygotsky (1997) as the purposive behaviour that triggers (and is triggered by) learning. According to Vygotsky, emotional reactions influence behaviour by cultural and biological necessity, this being confirmed by the fact that “no feeling can be indifferent and without outcome in behavior” (p. 103). Every emotion (or feeling, the two terms are used interchangeably) is an active judgment: an urge to or a rejection of action. Actions affect and change the environment and the individual in social and cultural contexts. Education purposely enables individuals to generate change and to transmit to other generations and contexts the lessons learned.

This may generate the feeling of a safe haven even in extremely challenging experiences. My conceptualisation of this psychological state is grounded on two concepts: flow experience and metaphorical discourses.

Coherently with the positively felt state of deep concentration and calm that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined as flow, artistic experiences seem to me to be designed in order to initiate and sustain a state of flow. The occurrence of flow experience, the deep motivation described in terms of focused concentration on a given task, is made possible by clear frames, on-going feedback and an optimal balance between the challenges of the task at hand and the individual’s resources. This means that no matter how arduous the undertaking, the experience of difficulty is contextual and relative to the individual’s tools for coping with the challenges to be met in the task at hand. Especially interested in matters of artistic creativity, a topic with which he began his career (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990), Csikszentmihalyi described the state of flow in creative individuals, artists included. In my opinion, the arts offer a safe place for pursuing challenging tasks or experiences because of their inherent materiality and their dimension of make-believe. Participation in artistic experiences happens in a third space: the space of make-believe, where ordinary events are transformed into extra-ordinary experiences. In other words, the arts offer a playful place where individuals can be experimental without suffering the consequences they would in real life. In a make-believe situation, failure, for instance, does not lead to serious consequences, such as dismissal, death or social exclusion, as it might in real life. On the contrary, it allows cultural practices to be performed in a safe environment where individuals are willing, able and empowered to explore and experiment. For instance, actors who play the roles of villains do not suffer the consequences of being a villain, as it would happen in real-life situations. According to flow theory, what could tip the artistic experience into a negative judgment (refusal, distance, neglect) is the lack of individual competence in decoding the artistic riddles. This might happen (and does happen) when, for instance, individuals are not acquainted with artistic practices and their specific language. Fortunately, the safe haven experience is available to almost anyone, as proficiency in the language of art is not needed. Modest skills are sufficient to approach the arts, because of the perceptual
and intuitive character of artworks. Understanding artworks is about engaging in intuitive, heuristic and sensory cognitive and emotional processes. Almost anyone can access these spaces with modest skills of aesthetic understanding, because what is needed is a high level of sensory perception and of intuition. What is fundamental in flow terms is not knowledge or skills in themselves, but rather the optimal balance between the challenges that artworks offer and the individual’s ability to cope with them.

The other aspect of feeling safe in artistic experiences is, in my opinion, due to the arts’ intrinsic nature, which is metaphorical. The shift from ordinary to extraordinary is permitted by the fundamental quality of artistic communication: metaphorical discourse. According to Eco, metaphor etymologically means “transfer” or “displacement” (1984, p. 90); it allows something to stand for something else. This gliding from one meaning to the other is defined in Eco by means of oxymoron, a legitimate lie:

When someone creates metaphors, he is, literally speaking, lying – as everybody knows. But someone who utters metaphors does not speak ‘literally’: he pretends to make assertions, and yet wants to assert seriously something that is beyond literal truth. [...] Someone uttering metaphors apparently lies, speaks obscurely, above all, speaks of something other, all the while furnishing only vague information. [...] An implicature must click in the listener’s mind. Evidently, the speaker meant something else. [...] On what encyclopaedic rules must the solution of the metaphorical implicature base itself? (Eco, 1984, p. 89)

Metaphor does not convey literal meaning, as do ordinary similes, but a different (shorter) form of comparison. Art is, in this perspective, at the same time a real-life aesthetic experience and a metaphor for life in general and artworks are the expression of human experiences, visions, dreams, ideas, understandings and life as lived. Meaning is generated by means of the metaphoric structure, in between the real/literal and the artistic/figurative world. In this dialectic duality the positive/negative dilemma might not be relevant, as positive emotions in one world might turn into negative in the other. As for the Aristotelian understanding of tragedy, painful events on stage might become meaningful and liberating in the real world of audiences and actors. In the arts, the positive/negative dichotomy seems rather to be bypassed, through the metaphor’s shift of meaning and artistic meaning-making.

THE FATIGUE OF MAKING ART

So far I have claimed that: (1) art appreciation and art-making are nothing but different ways of participating in artistic experiences, (2) artistic experiences engage, through definition and practice, feelings of safety and well-being, (3) emotions in the arts are not necessarily positive or negative in a universal sense. In the following section, I suggest looking more closely at the emotions involved in professional
art-making. When individuals depend on the making of art in terms of their work and their professional identity, art-making, instead of feeling safe and happy, can be fraught with frustrations and conflicting emotions. How do professional artists cope with that? And how is this relevant to education?

In my interviews with professional artists (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015), the negative emotion most frequently mentioned was the fatigue that follows periods of deep concentration on artistic tasks (Ramsland). Flow experiences in creation imply a subsequent feeling of exhaustion: artists feel deeply tired, almost emptied of all energies (Ramsland, Rønsholdt, Olesen). This means that the artistic process can be so emotionally and cognitively intense that “sometimes you need to shut it off”, as Jordan says. The film-maker goes on to describe the shutting off of the creativity process as a recharging of energies, regeneration:

Sometimes you can just do nothing but create, create, create, and then all of a sudden the brain is fried because you just can’t see anymore. I think this idea of invention and seeing things differently and transforming them also [is] like if you do too many mathematical problems which also results in… visions that are shut down. (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 131)

Another side of artistic creation that can lead to negative emotions is the repetitive routines involved in artistic practices. Movie director Annette K. Olesen discerns different aspects of emotional negativity in art-making. On the one hand, her work can be “extremely tedious at times”, on the other, the high level of uninterrupted commitment to her job can be exhausting, especially if judged by non-artists:

I have friends who do not make movies, nor are even close to artistic industries and professions, and sometimes it’s very difficult for them to even partly understand my working hours, or to understand that I can be […] very busy when I’m up to something, and I do so because it is not just a profession, it’s me, it’s an investment to me. This is sometimes very exhausting. (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 132)

The artists’ extreme commitment to their job and developed sense of passion turn some specific kinds of challenges into negative resistance that artists try to reframe, diminish, address or eliminate. This might take the form of administration tasks for some (Fjord, Nord), for others it might be the lack of economic support (“missing funding”, Granhøj) or lack of recognition (Hustvedt) or lack of a trusting and trustful community of collaborating artists (Dehlholm). Even more interestingly, some artists label as negative some specific components of their creative effort. What musicians from The Mira Quartet call “listening technically” or the issues that bad artistic leadership can bring forth are far from being positive challenges that stimulate their creativity, but barriers to the unfolding of artistic inspiration. Palle Granhøj, too, mentions that it can be “terribly frustrating” being in the creative room, dealing with obstructions of any sort, even if obstructions are the chosen method of work, as in his own case. Similarly, Olesen admits that it can
be extremely castrating for the creative process if one is obliged to collaborate with someone who always says “no”. Artistic processes can be very delicate and tantalizing (Valeur). One interesting contribution to this theme comes from actress Julia Varley, who mentions a couple of deeply meaningful experiences that challenged her professional and human development. When she was in high school she witnessed a man screaming vulgarities at a group of girls who were demonstrating for their political ideals. Her feelings of injustice in this situation made her do something very concrete: she chose to step into the politically engaged group and demonstrate together with them. With the same emotional pattern of experiencing negative feelings (frustration, castration, outrage), she turned the feeling of being rejected and of no use, when she first joined Odin Teatret, into a drive for learning and development.

TURNING NEGATIVITY UPSIDE-DOWN

Having discussed negative feelings involved in the making of art, I must also remark that the artists interviewed mentioned positive experiences more often than negative ones. I interpreted this finding according to the positive bias implicit in the artists’ narratives: asking artists about their main passion (their art and artistic process) and about their main motivational drives, will inevitably bring forth positive feelings. Asking someone who is passionate about a given activity to talk about that activity is a request that is destined to receive a positive response.

Another interpretation resides in the disposition of the artists in looking for opportunities in spite of challenges, which is the core of artistic creativity. Artistic practices are based on the building of rules and constrictions against which to find original solutions. This can become a dispositional mind-set in artists. An example of this is the above-mentioned challenge of exhaustion: artists seems to have turned this problem upside-down by giving large emphasis to the necessary role of pauses. Olesen describes her artistic creation as “a mixture of going on and quitting”, while others tell that, if they have been in the process of creation too long, they need to step out of it and find a resting place. Even distractions in this upside-down logic can be welcome as possibly positive elements in the creative process. Distractions may allow the creative battery to recharge.

Some of the artists interviewed described the bridging of positive and negative ends and substantiated it differently. Valeur, for instance, bypasses the very duality of positive and negative, stating that what is relevant in the artistic creative process is depth of thinking and involvement, which can paradoxically contain both positivity and negativity:

For me it has never been important whether it was positive thinking or negative thinking, for me it has been more important if it was deep thinking or shallow thinking. And good art gets sharp by its depth and depth contains the same amount of light and darkness, or, it contains the same amount of tearing things...
down as of building things up. So if you cannot... if you do not master both, then it’s just not good enough. (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 134)

A similar approach can be found in Barba, where artistic composition is portrayed as an emotionally hard but rewarding struggle. Odin Teatret’s director Eugenio Barba extends the emotional dilemma in the arts to the –emotionally paradoxical– enjoyment of the process of struggling:

[It feels good] not when I solve but when I am struggling. This situation is connected with a feeling also of anguish and despair. I repeat to myself that I will not manage it this time. You’re driving through a landscape which is grey and never ends, and suddenly you see the sand, a tiny piece of blue sky, and a beach reveals itself to your eyes and you become aware that that you are leaving behind the grey season, the oppressing feeling that there was no way out. I start discovering my orientation and this orientation is not something that I knew when I started, it is a surprise, an amazement, almost a shock. (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 134)

Only apparently this quote seems to contradict what other artists in this study maintain about the effort of concentrated attention, which feels enjoyable and easy while flow is ongoing, fatigue and exhaustion coming only after the activity is finished, as a sort of epiphenomenon. I interpret what Barba says here as a resilience statement: he enjoys the challenge per se while the art-making process is progressing. The artistic struggle in itself is full of expectation, as the metaphor of the grey clouds relates. Dancer and choreographer Palle Granhøj also mentions challenges and the establishment of rules as the initiation of creative processes. However, in Granhøj’s artistic processes, obstructions are balanced by practices in safe environments. If the dancer is developing his materials (movements, steps, jumps) and routines (actions, dance steps) all day long “it is very safe to come down to the studio for the dancer, for they know that this is how it is done” (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 134). What Granhøj is conceptualising here is an optimal balance between the feeling of challenge (rules, obstructions) and of safety (trust, well-being), a balance that recalls the one described in flow theory. In flow theory, this equilibrium opens up to the emergence of the experience of flow, i.e. the positive state of focused concentration and self-forgetfulness. As elsewhere conceptualised (Chemi, 2016), enjoyment per se indicates an autotelic pleasure, which in the arts is a fundamental prerequisite for the very choice of initiating a creative project. If human beings didn’t feel pleasure in expression and creation, the very existence of art-making would be at stake. It follows that this enjoyment has actually a telos, an instrumental end or purpose: the making of art. As jazz musicians Anders and Benjamin Koppel say in their interview, if artists do not enjoy the process in itself, they cannot create and hold on to the challenges of the creative process.

Some theories about positive emotions can be helpful in understanding the implicit affective dynamics behind artistic experiences. For instance, in Fredrickson
and Branigan (2005) positive emotions are active agents in broadening individual cognitive strengths and building emotional resilience or robustness, indeed their theory is called the broaden-and-build theory. Their studies show that positive emotions are able to expand individual learning potential and develop optimal knowledge. The broaden-and-build theory is interesting for the investigation of the role of emotions in education, because it is based on the belief that positive affect can influence learning by generating ideas that are: unusual, flexible and inclusive, creative, open to information and effective. However, these studies do not specifically consider emotions arising from experiences with the arts, but are concerned with generic psychological states. Also their attitude towards emotions draws fundamentally from psychology, looking at emotions as “short-lived experiences that produce coordinated changes in people’s thoughts, actions, and physiological responses” (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005, pp. 313–332). The consequence for education is great, positive emotions being addressed as phenomena that are able to expand the individual’s attention, cognition and action: “[emotions] broaden the scopes of attention, cognition, and action, widening the array of percepts, thoughts, and actions presently in mind” (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005, p. 315). The consequence for the arts is that, if artistic experiences are able to inspire positive emotions, this will likely lead to a broadening and building of intellectual and volitional dispositions.

Again from a psychological viewpoint, albeit different, the intellectual dimension of art experience and enjoyment is also emphasised in Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), where the cognitive effort in the decoding stage is interpreted as a complex problem-solving approach that intellectually can be very satisfying. The response to a sensory stimulus in the arts occurs for no other reason than to sustain the interaction with the artwork and involves the individual’s engagement, focusing his or hers attention on the task at hand. The experiential consequence of such a deep and autotelic involvement is “intense enjoyment characterized by feelings of personal wholeness, a sense of discovery, and a sense of human connectedness” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 178). Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) interpret the positive affect emerging from this activity as a response to a challenge. Positive affects emerge from a responsive behaviour that is valued as satisfactory or appropriate in a given context. The activity of finding an appropriate solution to a challenging problem generates affective responses of pleasure. In this perspective, cognitive solutions might have a purpose in themselves and be autotelic. In other words, individuals engage in artistic activities because the experience feels rewarding in itself, due to the cognitive challenge that is being addressed. The emotions generated are not only intense and positive (joy, wholeness, curiosity) but also meaningful to the individual (personal, human), and they relate to fellow human beings (connectedness) and the world in a deep desire to explore (discovery). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) this positive synergy is valuable in relation to learning and applicable to education, because it is able to arouse learning-enhancing emotions, such as commitment, curiosity, desire to learn and ease of learning. This perspective is consistent with socio-cultural views on learning.
For instance, according to Vygotsky (1997) purposive behaviour is generated as a conscious response to stimuli and learning emerges from it. This means that a full integration of embodied experiences and emotions is the core of each learning process. The perceptive system, based on sensory and bodily experiences, feeds in different ways the cognitive system, for instance by triggering arousal or interest or engagement. In this way organisms apply analytical skills, initiating processes of decomposition and composition, but also appropriate responses in form of actions.

Another area where potential negativity is turned upside-down in artistic experiences is the activity of problem-solving. Throughout the interviews, problems are mentioned as something to be sought out, something to be enjoyed and something to be solved. Problem-finding suggests the heuristic nature of artistic creativity and problem-solving, the implicit cognitive effort involved in understanding artistic problems. The affective side introduces a whole new field of attention to the relationship between emotions and creativity. The satisfaction of turning a problem or crisis into something good is voiced in Johannes Exner’s description of the creative process:

...you have a very big problem, and then you say, this is a challenge. So you could say that your mood swings up and down, but if you control it, it becomes fun. And we have been... we’ve had many crises [in our architectural firm], so I do not know, we have also had cases where we have pulled out because we couldn’t deal with [it], and so you could say it was also a shame, but oh well...

(Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 136)

This statement by the, then, 86-year-old architect hints at a possible psycho-emotional interpretation of artists’ strategies for turning negativity upside-down: persistence in the artistic effort and commitment to the artistic project. Being in the artistic safe haven does not imply effortless states of grace, rather persistent and continuous hard work. But where do artists find their motivation to persevere in spite of rejections, failures, mistakes, resistance of media and materials, tiredness and frustrations?

THE MOTIVATION TO PERSEVERE

As I have explored elsewhere (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015), artists, like other creative individuals (Hennessey 2010), have proven throughout history their ability to master the skills of persistence. In the study on creative individuals –including artists- that Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) discussed, they looked at creative professionals who had long-term engagement with creative tasks. Their findings show that persistence is one of the key characteristics of creativity in later life. Probably due to the arts’ inherent requirements, professional artists are called to be or become exceptionally resistant to constraints, challenges, and obstructions. Professional artists cannot rely on moments of inspiration or bliss, but rather need to navigate through uncertainty constantly, therefore they need to have or develop the skills of perseverance and determination. A further hypothesis might relate to the
societal functions of arts as either supporting or challenging the establishment and powers of society. In the former case, artists might assist potentates in expressing their power, e.g. in the example of the Medici family in sixteenth century Florence. In the latter case, the arts are attributed an almost profane function of critique and opposition to status quo. In this situation, artists are recurrently left at the margins of society and need persistence to continue their work. Values of cultural renewal or ideological provocation are almost ontological to the arts as one of their implicit functions, together with aesthetic uplifting, appreciation of beauty, divertissement, ideological statement, transmission of knowledge or values, cognitive effort and so forth. Historical periods and socio-cultural contexts constantly modify the functions of art genres. One example of this can be classical ballet, which is not, in our contemporary Western society, a means of radical renewal in society. However, we cannot be blind to the fact that both incremental and radical changes continuously occur within the genre and practice of ballet. The fact that conservative or totalitarian societies generally react strongly against the disruptive role or function of the arts confirms the power of the arts, but also the hardship that in these socio-cultural conditions artists might experience, by acquiring an enforced marginal role. Artists struggle for their own existence and right to exist in society, but also daily with (or against) a medium or material. As Julia Varley says: “you have to be patient and work hard, and that is not something which is obvious, because a lot of people think that acting is just, yes, being inspired by something” (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 137).

When the struggle against medium and material is done, the negotiation with society begins. For all creative individuals, to create something new with value is often an undertaking that comes with the need to be able to persuade others of the appropriateness of the creative solution. As Runco (2010) and Simonton (1995) conceptualise, standing up to societal pressure to persuasion is a typical challenge for creative individuals. Adding to this, artists have to deal with an open heuristic method that makes artistic creativity a hard nut to crack, and artists exceptionally disposed to persist against adversities. Hustvedt mentions almost matter-of-factly the acceptance of hardship as a part of the artist’s identity: “[…] Hardship can be good. None of us can avoid it, after all. Resilience can come out of hardship, and that resilience also plays a role in becoming an artist” (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 137). I agree with Weisberg (1993) that the artists’ resilience in creative tasks is nothing but an ordinary process, common to and shared by all individuals. Artists are not born more resilient than other individuals. However, unlike Weisberg, I maintain that artists are trained – by education or practice – and train themselves – if autodidacts – to continually learn and employ these dispositions and these skills in order to create artistically. Perseverance, in the artists’ case, is not a soft skill, but a fundamental creative disposition. The endless training and preparation for hardship is justified by the very nature of artistic work: the dialogue (or for some, the fight) with a resistant matter, medium and conveyance of meaning through those means, together with the task of constant negotiation within a context (persuasion). But
what motivates artists in their stern determination? What are the elements of this artistic resilience?

Much is still to be explored regarding the motivational side of artistic creativity. Fundamental contributions about motivation in general are from Amabile (1996), Deci (1975), Deci and Ryan (1985) and indirectly Csikszentmihalyi (2000, 1996). It is still much debated whether intrinsic (inherently interesting tasks) or extrinsic (task engagement in order to achieve external goals) motivation drives creative individuals and creative processes. Findings in this field are mostly collected by means of controlled psychological experiments and identify the close interrelation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drives by emphasising the prominence of contextual conditions. In her first account of motivation and creativity Amabile (1983) advocated the intrinsic argument:

Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity, but extrinsic motivation is detrimental. It appears that when people are primarily motivated to do some creative activity by their own interest in and enjoyment of that activity, they may be more creative than they are when primarily motivated by some goal imposed on them by others. (p. 15)

Subsequently, she revised this too sharp dualism in the light of new evidence (1996) and proposed a more contextual and relational approach. Her most recent work, similarly to the work of Deci and Ryan (1985), seems to suggest that, regardless whether a task or activity is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, creative outputs can be achieved. Extrinsic motivators such as economic rewards or other forms of reinforcements (grades, appreciation, fame) can become intrinsic, for instance if money can ensure the success of a meaningful project or if acknowledgement is provided by significant others or in meaningful relationships. According to these perspectives, what seem to make a difference to motivation are traits related to the individual subjects, the nature of the task at hand and the environment in which individuals interact.

When the nature of the task is specifically artistic, the activity turns out to be at the same time challenging and rewarding (Amabile, 1996, p. 133). The artists interviewed describe their tasks as enjoyable in themselves, which is consistent with motivation theories that indicate enjoyable activities as being the most motivating (Amabile, 1996, p. 149). Pleasantness of the artistic task is defined in Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson as autotelic, as it has an end in itself (1990). Elsewhere I proposed that professional artists, even though their art-making has a specific goal (exhibition, performance, recording, publishing), are able and willing to suspend their attention to this goal or output, in order to fully concentrate on art-making as if it were autotelic (Chemi, 2016). Even in the case of disruptive artistic experimentations or improvisational performances the task holds a specific goal, such as finding new ways or solutions, but the goal tends to disappear in the joy of the making. An example of this is jazz improvisation: here the goal is a musical communication by means of a fine balance between solos and orchestra pieces, but
As Anders and Benjamin Koppel recurrently say in their interview, what musicians feel while playing is the fun of it. Not only musicians do not focus on the final task or purpose, but also they are very careful in avoiding any task-driven approach. The two Koppel musicians maintain that one cannot keep on being a musician if one does not perceive one’s tasks as pleasurable.

Looking at artists’ motivation might contribute to a new understanding of the affective side of creativity, because artists seem to cover affects that are fundamental in learning processes. Emotionally, the nature of the artistic task seems to be characterised by passion and its dysfunctional twin, obsession. In both cases, interest is stretched to its extreme. In the artists interviewed, though, these emotions, rather than jeopardising the creative effort, canalised the individual’s attention and creative skills by means of the interplay and interconnection of emotions and rationality. Unlike the stereotype of the artists as slave to their passions, in artistic creation very little is left to inaccuracy and neglect – complexity is embraced and thoughtfully framed in creative routines and working processes, improvisation is unleashed and looked at critically, chaos is doled out in the right proportions and at the right time (as Ramsland says specifically of his writing process). Another cliché to revise is the understanding of creative processes as divided into steps, where creativity and intuition (divergent thinking) are separated from rational or critical decisions (convergent thinking). Rather, I suggest that intuition and rationality work together, often simultaneously, in artistic processes. According to motivation theories, an artist who is so focused on his task, as Ramsland tells above, might find motivating any experience that is salient to his task, just because the activity or experience is relevant to what is meaningful to him. Meaningfulness of the task at hand, or as Deci (1975) defines it its “salience”, is what might motivate or enhance motivation in individuals, making a difference in complex tasks as creation and learning. Similarly, the appropriateness of experiences to the task at hand might be instrumental to a specific – artistic or creative – project. Deci (1975), for instance, mentions that feedback that gives information on one’s competence has positive effects on creativity and performance, which is consistent with Amabile (1996).

One more character trait that is related to motivation and its subjective perception is resilience. As Julia Varley says, creativity to her is the “ability of turning a weakness into a strength” (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 139), which she has done consistently, both in her career and in her private life. She does that by getting along with the life conditions she meets and by keeping on trying, thus engaging in an undefeated dialogue with herself and with the process:

Each creative process is different so you can never rely on what you did the time before. The only thing you can rely on is that you trust that at some point it will start working. So in all of your desperation and tears and aargh… inside you, you know that at some point it will come out. But it’s like you can never know how to make a creative process, you know that you can do it, but every
time you have to learn how to do it all over again. (Chemi, Jensen, & Hersted, 2015, p. 140)

The process of learning is in this description life-long and overflowing with feelings of both positive and negative charge: from one side feelings of frustration and of being overwhelmed, and on the other side also feelings of trust and hope. Here it is plain to discern the actress’ skills and experience reassuring her about the perceived chaos of the creative process. Varley knows, because she has experienced it, that each creative process is unique and that by keeping on trying, at a certain point, solutions will make themselves evident. Moreover, she has learned that creative processes are diverse and imply a methodological openness on how to realise them or how to learn them. She knows all that, even when she feels discouraged. Trusting the creative process might be one of the basic elements of the artist’s resilience, being resilience defined broadly as “the ability to bounce back or overcome adversity” (McCubbin, 2001, p. 3).

Every creative project is also a quest for knowledge. In artistic creativity, this means, not only the collection of knowledge or information (about material, medium, recipient, content), but also the sharpening of psycho-emotional tools to overcome the challenges of doubt, uncertainty and insecurity. According to Kvium, creative artists, in order to focus on their process, build the conditions for preserving a clear mind and sharp artistic judgment despite external negative conditioning. The consequence for education is significant, because this might imply that one of the artists’ strategies for creativity is their conscious acquisition of resilient psycho-emotional (e.g. trust in the process), cognitive (e.g. learning how to do it) and methodological (e.g. applying critical skills) strategies. No artist seems to suggest that these strategies are biological or innate and they mention a variety of possible drives for these resilient behaviours: Barba says it is interest, others point to curiosity (Hustvedt, Kvium), others again mention extrinsically motivating rewards for hard work, such as good food, treats, hedonistic pleasures (Klejs and Rensholdt) and underline that individuals can throw themselves into hard work for short periods only. This means that, not only these so-called soft skills are necessary to creativity, but also that they can – and ought to- be learned.

BUILDING SAFE HAVENS

Summing up, the issue of emotional responses to artistic experiences is complex and often contradictory. First of all, artistic participation in the arts is always an active endeavour but can consist of different qualities, depending whether the activity is receptive (appreciation) or generative (art-making). Secondly, participating in artistic endeavours stimulates a wide spectrum of emotional valences and intensities. In other words, artistic experiences can be positive or negative, strong or weak, or even a mixture of both poles (think back to Beckett’s tragicomedy). What is common to all sort of artistic experiences, no matter the quality of participation
or the emotional valence of artwork perception, is the fact that individuals can find a safe haven for cognitive and emotional challenges, for experimentation, for learning and developing, for including heuristics in knowledge, for indirect cognition and communication (metaphors), for training resilience and opportunity-seeking strategies. The core of these safe environments can be described, as in flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), as the optimal balance between the challenges of artistic tasks (the struggle with ideas, the dialogue with materials and media, the effort of expression) and the (cognitive, emotional, sensory, bodily) competence of the individual. Navigating through challenges can be frustrating or difficult, but the arts always offer an engaging space where the ordinary is sensory and heuristic and where the ordinary glides into new, original and unexpected meanings. According to Vygotsky (1997), being the educational process intrinsically creative it has to do with human growth and with the transformation of problems, discomfort and unease into the creation of intelligent human beings. Education should be based on the three elements of the reactive process: perceiving (senses feeding the brain through nerves), processing (analysis, decomposing), and responding. The very growth of all organisms depends on the ability for learning and developing through emotional experiences, together with others, either in social relationships or in cultural-historical contexts. In Vygotsky (1997), education should reflect the need for “intelligent emotions”, which are thoughtful emotions at the core of actions and change. The creative element informs the outputs of education, leading to human beings capable of adapting to contexts, of acquiring new knowledge out of discontentment, of being well-functioning organisms and of mutually adapting emotionally and cognitively. Fundamental tools in order to achieve and foster these learning processes are language and artefacts, mediators of appropriate change for organisms and cultural communities.

The artistic haven unfolds in the safety of make-believe, of invented worlds where metaphors signify while hiding and hinting, while tickling the senses and bodily knowledge. If society is to expressly build safe havens for whole human beings, where creative, critical, empathic, humanistic thinking unfolds, the arts must play a central role. These environments should be carefully designed by means of cross-disciplinary discourses, where the arts can speak their proper language and seduce participants into playful and exciting journeys. These spaces will be spaces of learning, questioning and developing for individuals together with others and in dialogue with materials, media and meanings. Finally, the well-being of participants will be guaranteed by the establishment of cultures of persistence – where mistakes are welcomed and are part of the working process – and of resilience.

NOTES

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