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Music education as manipulation – a proposal for playing

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Abstract

An important feature of music is its ability to affect people in unpredictable and deep ways. Music has therefore been used to oppress and (mis)lead people by dictatorships, religious leaders and supermarkets amongst others, and to help lure people into acting in ways that are beneficial for the manipulators. Such forms of ethically dubious musical manipulation happen because of the sublime potential of music to do something to people, and in such a way that they have few ways to defend themselves against it. Thus, the power of music is also the reason people seek out the unforeseen affects and effects in their encounters with the arts. Building on a theory of aesthetic communication, and seeking support from Deleuze and Guattari (1994), Dewey (2005) and Spinoza (Spinoza & Lagerberg, 2001), the aim of this article is to propose the term *manipulation* as a tool in music education or as a vehicle for teachers and researchers to help frame activities in music education as meaningful for aesthetic communication. I argue that manipulation is a necessary component of all art and aesthetic communication, that, despite its usual negative connotations, manipulation is an act that can be used for good or bad purposes, and that music education has a duty to educate pupils in artistic manipulation. Manipulation is considered action, and as such, it is argued that it can take on any value from good to bad depending on the intentions and effects it causes. This article invites a discussion of possible ways of designing music education that revolve around tinkering with aesthetic communication, and wherein desirable manipulation plays a vital role, and outcomes-based curricula are replaced with an alternative more compatible with the arts.

Keywords: *music education, aesthetic communication, manipulation, rationality, Deleuze, Dewey*

Introduction

A six-year-old Swede starting school today has possibly heard more music than her great-grandparents heard during their entire lifetimes. Music is everywhere nowadays and is

being used for a wide range of purposes: to heighten the emotional impact of films, as theme songs for TV-shows, as ambient sound in shops to encourage people to buy more, and as jingles for commercials, to mention but a few. In all these examples children and adults are somehow exposed to deliberate manipulation by an artist and/or seller who is trying to awaken particular emotions in the listener through the use of music. The listener is more or less knowingly being lured into (re)acting in a certain way: is she being manipulated?

Music is important to people. No matter where or when you were born, music plays a vital role in (parts of) your life. What would a wedding be without music? Would your favourite film be half as good without the music? How about that dance where you met the love of your life? The examples go on and on, but as far as we know, music is and has been, an important part of human life and culture in every society known to man (e.g. Mithen, 2006). Why music is important is still something of a mystery, although scholars from many disciplines have attempted to explain it (e.g. Pearce & Rohrmeier, 2012). This article will not attempt to answer the question of why music is important, but rather depart from the assumption that music is important to most people and cultures for a wide range of reasons. In this article, music is considered to be essentially communicative, and as such, John Dewey's (2005; 2004) theories of aesthetic experiences as holistic reconstructions of (parts of) the world are important sources of my thinking herein. This article proposes a renegotiation of the term *manipulation* as a functional concept for understanding some of the communicative purposes of art – and aesthetic education. This renegotiation will depart from several understandings, descriptions and definitions of manipulation filtered through a select few theories of relevance. As such, the article is not empirical, and its contribution is to music education philosophy in the way Deleuze and Guattari (1994) describe philosophy's task – to propose new concepts as useful tools for thinking. This article builds on previous publications by Cecilia Ferm Almqvist and myself, a few of which are co-authored, wherein we investigate a theory of music education from a perspective of *aesthetic communication* (Ferm Thorgersen & Thorgersen, 2007; Ferm Thorgersen & Thorgersen, 2008; Thorgersen, 2014; Thorgersen, 2016). Aesthetic communication as a framework for thinking about music education, means to focus on the communicative aspect of music as art and aesthetic expression. *Aesthetic communication* is presented later in the article, and *manipulation* is proposed as a new piece in the puzzle of aesthetic communication.

The aim of this article is to propose the term *manipulation* as a *tool* or *vehicle* in music education for teachers and researchers to help frame activities in music education as meaningful for aesthetic communication.

Manipulation is defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary (2019) as being used in three different ways whereof two are interpersonal “to control or play upon by artful, unfair, or insidious means especially to one's own advantage” and “to change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose”. I will also add from psychology that manipulation always is, or attempts to be, covert to some extent and in some manner: The manipulator

does not reveal all aspects of what he wants the manipulated to do, think, feel or mean (Maillat & Oswald, 2009). As a workable definition of manipulation for the argument in this article I suggest manipulation as *a (partly) covert way of persuading someone into feeling, thinking, meaning and/or doing something (unannounced)*.

Manipulation in this definition sounds like something that should be avoided at all costs – especially in education. Tricking students or teaching students to be fraudulent is the opposite of what education usually stands for. Despite this, I will use this article to argue that manipulation is a necessary component of all art and aesthetic communication, that manipulation is an act that can be used for good or bad purposes, and that music education has a duty to educate pupils in artistic manipulation. Hence, I argue that manipulation could be used as an important *tool* or *vehicle* in music education around which didactic choices could be built, both to develop students' awareness of how to affect others and how they are affected, but also to develop as artistic manipulators themselves. Manipulation in the sense of being part of the communicative artistic process is not addressed in any detail by any music education theory as far as I have been able to find out. The only examples of how manipulation has been attended to in music education is to point out the dangerous power of music for the individual when abused by governments and corporations (e.g. Woodford, 2005). Whilst manipulative aspects of teaching are discussed in relation to the notion of “the art of teaching”, I do *not* propose that the teacher should manipulate pupils in undesirable ways. Manipulation in music education should be playful, ethical and transparent. I therefore propose a different understanding where manipulation is understood as value-neutral.

Foundations for the agenda of this article

Before going on to discuss manipulation as a tool or vehicle in music education, I will take an empirical detour to exemplify how artists deliberately manipulate as a part of their musicianship. In an ongoing research process (Thorgersen & von Wachenfeldt, 2018; Thorgersen & von Wachenfeldt, 2019) a colleague and I have been studying musical learning amongst young musicians in the genre Black Metal. Black Metal is an extreme sub-genre of Heavy Metal characterised sonically by high pitched screaming, heavily distorted guitars, rapid drumming and long compositions filled with disharmony. The sonic part of the music, however, is only one part of the package. All of the senses are involved. The musicians wear black clothes, which are often filthy and even foul-smelling due to stains from blood or other corporal fluids, paint their faces in order to appear scary, and fill the stage with occult symbols and remains or representations of dead bodies (Thorgersen & von Wachenfeldt, 2018; Thorgersen & von Wachenfeldt, 2019). We argue that this combination can be seen as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, where all of the senses are stimulated in a multimodal attempt to inflict a sense of terror and evil into the listener (and performers). Black Metal

is about worshipping Lucifer, and these young musicians all articulate that they seek to communicate dark, negative feelings in people as well as get into contact with similar feelings within themselves. They use music – or the Gesamtkunstwerk – in an attempt to make people feel and experience something they could not have pictured in advance. They want to knock the audience off their feet.

It is not uncommon for scholars to suggest that music and art have manipulative and persuasive potential. Looking through the history of music in relation to politics and religion, it would be naive not to recognize how music has been utilized by governments and religious leaders to create an opinion of togetherness, a sense of collective meaning, arousal before battle or motivation to go to church – or to war. Music touches the emotions of each person in ways that connect her with others and that demarcate her from other groups. As Woodford (2005) argues:

Music can [...] break through our self-defences in ways that language cannot, while helping us to empathize with and learn more about others. In this sense, music may be truly liberating. However, music can just as easily be used to cynically manipulate, deceive, or distort. (87)

History shows that music is both a means to *split and divide* and to *connect and befriend*.

In the Black Metal example above, many people might claim that this is one such example of undesirable manipulation. Interestingly, we have described in our research how this genre – despite horrible consequences such as murders and church burnings in the 1990s and early 2000s (see e.g. Thorgersen & von Wachenfeldt 2018; Thorgersen & von Wachenfeldt 2019) – enriches the lives of most of those involved with it in a whole range of ways, and creates technically skilled musicians as a side effect. Black Metal musicians seek to manipulate their audiences into getting in contact with evil and the devil. Interestingly, it is the same kind of manipulation I have observed in another ongoing research project where I have been visiting a Pentecostal church where music plays an important part in helping the congregation experience good and God. The power of music is used to seduce the audience – and the audience wants to be seduced. As Carlshamre (2006) acknowledges, it is not uncontroversial to choose the term ‘manipulation’ when talking about music. Implied by the term is a deviant and hidden agenda that attempts to influence the audience in ways obscured from them. Carlshamre (2006) uses the example of how film music works as an emotive amplifier to bring about the message conveyed by the actors on screen. Even if Carlshamre (2006) does not appreciate the use of the term ‘manipulation’ he recognizes the phenomenon and sees no other term that can be substituted for it. Carlshamre (2006) also brings up the term ‘persuasion’ as a related but dissimilar term, to suggest how an audience member comes to understand the intentions of the persuader/manipulator. Whilst ‘persuasion’ is considered by Carlshamre (2006) to be a part of the communicative aspects of human interaction, manipulation is not considered communicative because of its lack of

interactional possibilities. As I will argue later, manipulation in art could absolutely invite the manipulated into dialogue. I hence disagree with Carlshamre's (2006) idea that manipulation is necessarily separate from communication. Manipulation in art can work reciprocally and thereby also be a part of communication, and of aesthetic communication in particular; and I will attempt to redefine the term so as to reveal it as a necessary function of human interaction. By 'necessary function', I imply that in order for any meaning to be shared, human communication is necessarily dependent on a desire to persuade and on a wish to emphatically meet the other (Thorgersen, 2018). In this meeting of 'intentionalities', a certain amount of manipulation is used in order for the intentions to collapse into a new understanding. I will come back to this below, but first I will discuss how manipulation in the arts is addressed elsewhere.

In an anthology titled *Music and Manipulation* (Brown & Volgsten, 2006), music is ascribed six different functions in group processes:

1. "Music has an important role in bringing about behavioural conformity and in stimulating compliance with social norms"
2. "Music is a communication device that serves as an important component of systems of persuasion and manipulation"
3. "As a force of social conformity, music has a major role in defining and reinforcing social identity, serving as a socializing force that fosters enculturation of individuals"
4. "[M]usic serves as an important basis for sorting people into groups in large-scale societies, creating music preference groups"
5. "Music is an important device for creating group-level coordination and cooperation"
6. "Music is an important device for emotional expression, conflict, resolution and social play" (xxvi)

Brown and Volgsten (2006) do not argue that these factors define what music is – but only that these social features of music can be used to understand what music does in the dynamics of communication. They attempt to develop a socio-musicological method for musical analysis asking:

who sends what message to whom? What are the sender's intentions? To what extent do the receivers' responses conform with the sender's intentions? What are the conditions influencing the receiver's interpretation? And what kinds of costs and benefits are involved in this type of communication?

(Brown & Volgsten, 2006, p. xxviii)

I argue that these questions are just as vital for music education. They also share similarities with the aspects of awareness I present below about aesthetic communication. But first,

I ask if music has the power to influence people's actions, decisions, social identities and belonging in ways that are concealed from them; and isn't that a bad thing? According to van Dijk (2006) music should be considered dangerous.

In van Dijk's (2006) version of Critical Discourse Analysis, manipulation is an important contributor to the oppression of people. Manipulation not only involves power, but the abuse of power, that is, domination. More specifically, manipulation implies the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse; manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated (van Dijk, 2006).

As already shown, music has persuasive power and works to modify and affect our (emotional) states of mind. van Dijk (2006) explains how media or multimodal expressions have this character of potential manipulation. Like Carlshamre (2006), he argues that there is only a fuzzy line between 'manipulation' and 'persuasion'. According to van Dijk (2006), the difference between manipulation and persuasion is that with manipulation the manipulated is a victim unaware of how or that he is being changed. I agree with van Dijk's (2006) definition, apart from his idea of the necessarily negative character of manipulation. As Brown and Volgsten (2006) argue, a central feature of art is that the emotive character of the medium could be ruined if the artist explains too much – not unlike an illusionist who reveals how she's cutting a man in two pieces.

Would the (in)famous piece '4:33' by John Cage have worked if the audience had known that the piano music consisted of only rests? Even in less controversial pieces of music, this holds true, in the sense that there has to be something new and somewhat unexpected in the artistic act for it to be interesting, and for it to provide an aesthetic experience. The circus researcher John-Paul Zaccarini (2013) frames this process of deceiving the audience as being a contract between the audience and the performer:

the audience would be forced to sign the masochistic contract but all the while being made aware of how a masochist manipulates – circus making as metaphorical, implicating the audience as an enabling condition, as willing victims, in the symbolic. (160)

While circus and music are different art forms, the above argument is as valid in music as in the circus: The performer seeks to manipulate the audience, and the audience wants to be manipulated. To break that contract would be to break with one of the basic preconditions of art. As I have argued elsewhere (Thorgersen 2016, 2018), art can be seen as intentional, playful experimentation with conventions and expectations to create meaningful experiences. As in the Black Metal and Pentecostal church examples above, the artist and audience agree: "Please manipulate me and bring me somewhere I cannot find on my own" the audience says, and the artist answers: "Of course! Please trust me (and admire/reward me) and we will go there together". On this basis, I claim that *obscured transparency* is a central feature of what defines art. In the following will seek help from the theories of Dewey

(2005) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994) to further explain what I mean. In the next few paragraphs I will begin by zooming out; towards the end I will land on some reflections and implications for music education.

Music, art, aesthetics and manipulation as action

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1994), art, science and philosophy represent different and complimentary ways for human beings to make sense of the world. While science picks phenomena apart and analyses their component parts and thereby attempts to understand the whole, philosophy constructs terms that allow for new ways of thinking about the world. According to them, the role of art in the human endeavour of constructing knowledge is to present (parts of) the world in new and unexpected ways that stimulate new or different understandings and insights. These insights are not necessarily what the artist expects, though they are formed by the meeting between the artwork and the audience, the space in which artwork takes on meaning. Art combines affects and percepts (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994) – in other words emotions and experiences. To experience art is hence to be open to new ways of understanding, and thus for surprises.

To reflect is an action, according to Dewey (2005), and knowledge is constructed from reflections on experience. The reflection is social as well as personal. What makes aesthetic experiences special according to Dewey (2005) is their holistic potential, in the sense that art constitutes a particular kind of communicative experience that allows for new understandings. In neither Dewey's (2005) nor Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) theories, is music, or art in general, considered objects. Music, and art, is acting and interacting – much like Small's (1998) term 'musicking' whereby the substantive 'music' is exchanged for the verb 'to music'. Instead of asking what music is, these theories would rather have us ask what music does. One answer to the latter question is that music manipulates, or that 'musicking' involves manipulation. If we agree that a central feature of music, and of art in general, is a combination of being covert with respect to its message and means, combined with a desire to impact and perhaps surprise the audience, music and art are necessarily manipulative by nature, in the sense that an expression cannot be art or provide an aesthetic experience if it is too familiar or obvious. As stated earlier, manipulation in the sense of being a part of the communicative artistic process is not recognised in music education as being solely dangerous. The understanding of manipulation I propose is therefore different; manipulation is understood as value neutral. An important question thus becomes whether anything can ever be value neutral.

I argue that every word can and does exist on at least three different planes. On the first plane we find the word as action; in this case *manipulation* can never be value neutral. Manipulation – as education or thinking – is always an activity or action, according to both

Dewey (2004; 2005) and Deleuze (Bignall, Bowden & Patton, 2014); and according to both it will, therefore, have consequences. In other words, these actions and interactions will necessarily have intentions and consequences in terms of their position on axes between good and evil. The second type of occurrence (plane) of manipulation (or education again) is more connected to Wittgenstein's (1963) language game and concerns the associations and common uses of the word as linguistic dice in social interplay. Not even here can manipulation or education ever be value neutral.

If these two planes were all there was to a word, no word could ever be considered value neutral. A third plane is where a word can exist without value. In order to describe a concept such as 'education' or 'manipulation', that concept has to exist somewhere else outside its actions or associations. Such an understanding of a concept coincides with what Deleuze (Colebrook, 2006; Deleuze & Guattari, 2002) calls the 'plane of immanence'. The plane of immanence is similar to how Spinoza describes everything and everyone as being connected through being the same, whilst being at the same time different (Deleuze, 1988; Spinoza & Lagerberg, 2001). People can understand each other to a certain degree through some kind of recognition of a phenomenon based on the attributes of the phenomenon; in this case the phenomenon *manipulation* is characterised by attributes that define it as a force that is sometimes used in social interaction to covertly persuade someone of something. All participants in a culture who have experienced the word *manipulation* on the first two planes should be able to recognize the phenomenon by its attributes, all along the value scale, as manipulation. On this third level, like a battery, most words can be charged with useful values or meanings that can be used in social interaction. The phenomenon can, therefore, be understood as value neutral (as well as value potential perhaps) on the plane of immanence. While this could be understood as somewhat essentialist and perhaps even transcendental, I would not claim that any phenomenon, concept or term have any permanent cultural or historical core, but that this 'core' is being reconstructed and renegotiated in every single human encounter; and, insofar as the phenomenon 'manipulation' can be recognised even when it has a positive function, it still exists on this third plane.

As argued above, art without manipulative features is hard to imagine since art represents the desire to construct the world anew, and to open up new, unexpected understandings: to surprise and change the audience and perhaps even the artist herself. To be manipulated in this sense is something people pay big money to experience when they attend concerts, theatres, or buy expensive paintings and so forth. People must surely *want* to be manipulated. Such manipulation can be good, though it can also be used for bad purposes if the intention is to lure people into doing things or wanting things that are bad for their 'nature'— such as buying too many sweets, singing in choirs to arouse hatred towards others, or other unhealthy, unethical or undesirable actions. Spinoza (Spinoza & Lagerberg, 2001), whose writings were one of Deleuze's most important sources of inspiration, claimed that man needed to be true to his nature to be happy. This happiness is not

solipsist or self-centred: rather the reverse. Deleuze (1988; Colebrook, 2006)) claims to be an empiricist, and, somewhat surprisingly, thought that the nature of a ‘good person’ is to be part of a whole. If each person is, as Spinoza (Spinoza & Lagerberg, 2001) claims, an integral part of the universe, containing God while being a tiny part of the vastness of God, negative manipulation of others would imply affecting some part of oneself negatively. Manipulation is, in other words, both a necessary part of art and aesthetic communication, and at the same time a dangerous tool that should be used with caution to enrich rather than to injure others.

This renegotiation of ‘manipulation’ that I propose here, as value neutral, is similar to how the term is used in the natural sciences. Few would claim that it is bad to manipulate sound through synthesizers or manipulate cells to fight cancer. At the same time, many would argue that it is bad to manipulate photos to present women as unnaturally skinny, or to genetically manipulate food to alter its colour. It is obvious that it is the intentions, actions and consequences of the manipulation that are the measure of its rightness. Thus, manipulation in relation to art and art education could be understood in the same way. This redefinition is inspired by what Foucault did with the term ‘power’ (Ball 2013). Instead of a definition wherein power is something possessed by someone and which is being used to dominate others, Foucault redefines power as a kind of social force that is value-neutral: a force that makes things happen, and which can be both good and bad. A similar usage of the term ‘manipulation’ is common in the technical sciences. Manipulation is a central characteristic of the arts and can be used for both good and bad ends. This redefinition would make manipulation a useful piece in the puzzle of aesthetic communication.

Aesthetic communication

In the conclusion of my licentiate thesis (Thorgersen, 2007), I questioned the terms ‘multimodality’, ‘multiliteracy’ and ‘*Det vidgade textbegreppet*’ (‘an extended notion of text’), and proposed instead *Aesthetic communication* as a functional term for thinking about education and the arts. Any extended notion of text suffers from the problem of being verbal-centric in the sense that it acknowledges music, dance, images and so forth as texts, with the consequence that a verbal text and the analytical and semiotic tools associated with it depart from verbal text as the norm, whilst other texts, such as music, are anomalous. The popular terms in social semiotic theory, *multimodality* and *multiliteracy*, have been criticised for presenting a simplified view of communication by separating understanding, decoding or comprehending a message (multiliteracy), and its presentation in an intended message (multimodality) (e.g. Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). The term aesthetic communication grew out of this discussion. It was inspired by John Dewey (2004) who defined communication as “sharing experience till it becomes a common possession” (9), and the

term aimed to open up a way to approach music and music education from the complex social and personal perspectives that understand music and music education as something more than the sum of their parts: musical structures, musical elements, social settings, human beings, historical lineages etc. As in all communication, aesthetic communication represents a set of human interactions that aims for common understanding through social reconstructions of experiences and knowledge. The term aesthetic communication should not be considered as an attempt to construct a philosophy or an educational theory that explains everything about art education, but rather as an attempt to launch a concept to open up other ways of understanding parts of what art education is and can be. Such an ambition fits well with Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) claim that the task of philosophy is to come up with concepts.

To connect with Deleuze and Guattari (2002), it is important to stress that communication is not a linear process. They propose a metaphor of a rhizome to describe human interaction, networking and causality. The rhizome is a sturdy root (ginger root for instance) that spreads asexually and in disruptive and unforeseeable, but still causal, ways. According to Deleuze and Guattari (Colebrook, 2006), the rhizome is not like a metaphor, because a metaphor represents something real that is outside understanding. Rather it is more akin to a philosophical concept that allows us to understand human interactions such as aesthetic communications in new ways – non-linear, causal but unpredictable, connected but ruptured – like a web of connections that is constantly changing and moving. The common possession in Dewey's (2004) definition of communication can consequently never be the same for two people, and the artist can never completely know how the artwork will influence the audience – even if they will always be emphatically tuned into (possible) perceptions of expressions. As human beings, we can never fully understand anything in exactly the same way that another person understands something. But through communication of varied sorts we strive through imagination, empathy and sharing of similar experiences to understand others, to connect with and befriend others, and also to (re)construct social bonds on the one hand and walls on the other. Any communicative action is, in other words, based on a complex but naturalised guesswork of possible effects of the mediated message for the intended audience. Deleuze and Guattari (1994; 2002) point out that there is no way we can possibly predict the effect of an action. The artistic manipulation is therefore not to lead the audience by the hand to some previously known place, but to open up a new and complex, perhaps chaotic, place for experience.

The theory of aesthetic communication is applied here to music education though it is applicable to the analysis of all aesthetic education. A number of recent publications (e.g. Ferm & Styrke, 2015; Thorgersen, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018), have elaborated on this theory, and point to the following aspects of awareness that can be improved in education and participation in artistic practices to increase understanding of, and fluency in, any form of aesthetic communication:

- Awareness of yourself as subject – your role and aesthetic competencies
- Awareness of and attention to the roles and aesthetic expressions of others
- Awareness of the context wherein communication takes place
- Awareness of the intended, perceived functions of aesthetic mediation and its potential variations.

These four factors are deeply intertwined with other forces, such as:

- The expectations of all parties involved
- The impetus or force that drives and disrupts communication
- The particular experiences of all individuals and social groups involved in communication
- The discursive power structures, history and doxa.

Aesthetic communication does not take the form of a linear communication model of transferring intentions from sender to receiver through the vehicle of a medium. For a good artist, there is a need to be able to understand how artistic manipulation works on these four levels, and how it can be understood as an impetus or force that drives and disrupts communication. Aesthetic communication is a complicated, socially refined reconstruction of experiences whereby the artist is constantly affected by others – and also by the embodied or imagined audience. As Dewey (e.g. 2005) points out, we are never alone. Even when we are physically alone, the people we have met, the contexts we know and our imagination of possible social encounters will influence the choices we make. The theory of aesthetic communication is situated in time and space and is relative to the social norms and discourses of every person at every moment. To introduce manipulation into this theory is to help define the aesthetic powers that awareness intends to reveal. What worked as aesthetic manipulation in the 1840s in Germany might well be considered kitsch or axiomatic in the 1960s in Germany, for this particular attempt to manipulate has lost its potential for surprise, and what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) claim to be the purpose of art, to show the world anew. This temporal feature of art is equally evident between cultures or social groups living simultaneously. The inclusion of manipulation into the theory of the aesthetic communication is thus an invitation to play with the magic of art for different audiences, and at the same time to allow for possible disclosures of less desirable uses of music as manipulative communication.

One possible way to shape music education around a notion of aesthetic communication may be found in the concept of ‘tinkering’. Lewis (2012) introduces this idea to describe how Agamben’s philosophy could have educational consequences. Tinkering is the antithesis to learning outcomes, wherein the desired learning is predefined and somewhat objectified and unchangeable (Thorgersen, 2014). Lewis (2012) explains tinkering from a San Francisco-based vocational education called The Tinkering School (<http://www.tinkeringschool.com>). This vocational education eschews all learning

outcomes, preferring to let learners play with the materials and possibilities at hand. Agamben's idea of 'studious play' enables an understanding of education other than one of outcomes-based logic – namely that education is “not so much a synthesis of play and study as [...] a state of productive tensions between moving towards and withdrawing from, melancholia and joy” (Lewis, 2012, p. 342). Study through tinkering can, in other words, be described as self-motivated, facilitated play with materials in a shifting movement between dwelling in and actively pursuing of change. But how does the teacher facilitate such learning?

The teaching of music and the arts as manipulation

Teaching is often described as an art. Searching the academic search engine Google scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) for the phrase “The art of teaching” returns approximately 22,800 hits. Among the more relevant titles for this article are “The Art of Teaching Music” (Jorgensen, 2008) and “Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching” (Garrison, 2010). The art of teaching is seen as something that facilitates and guides pupils through the trajectories of becoming good citizens and human beings. Thus, art is considered to be something refined and almost transcendental. But teaching could just as well be considered an art because teaching involves manipulation. Education always has a content that is supposed to be learnt. Whilst that content can be more or less predefined, the teacher has the responsibility to make sure that each student develops in accordance with the presumed best interests of the both student and society. This end therefore often justifies the means and students are lured into learning by using educational tricks such as external motivation, obscuring what the purpose of an activity is, training a skill that is assumed to have transfer effects to the ‘real skill’ at hand, and so forth. While teachers knowingly deceive the student to help her to develop in a desirable manner, this is not necessarily negative. It would be folly to believe that all children in an educational enterprise understand their own needs for possible development on both a personal and societal level. The teacher will therefore sometimes need to persuade the student in covert ways – and, as is the case with art – this manipulation is a part of the social agreement on what teaching is. This is not to say that educational manipulation by a teacher cannot be abusive and be used for undesirable control. Undoubtedly, teaching also involves this kind of manipulative aspect, but teachers take responsibility to adapt and use the manipulation so that it works to benefit the student in her present and future social settings. Being a music teacher could, in other words, be described as working with manipulation on at least two levels: The didactic level of facilitating learning for students, and as content for the student to learn to master music as aesthetic communication.

Dangers and possibilities of playing with music education and manipulation

If the purpose of art is, as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) claim, to affect through percepts and display new and unexpected possibilities for understanding, isn't awareness of the manipulative tools of the artist dangerous for the aesthetic experience? Could it be that by increasing awareness, the level of reflection kills possibilities for surprise? Might too high a level of awareness of the functions and tools for artistic manipulation create an undesirable filter through which artistic communication is reduced to nothing more than the decoding of intended meaning? A short anecdote explains this point. A fellow undergraduate student once explained to me that he could not listen to symphony orchestras because he was unable to analyse all the musical components. The music was too complex, and it only made him feel exhausted and lacking in control. I sometimes hear musicians in interviews claim that they never listen to music, and I would imagine that many with a higher education in music recognize the story about not being able to let go of the analytical approach to listening. Nonetheless, it is the responsibility of music education to train awareness and an analytical mindset. However, I do not propose that reflection take place solely through verbal language.

Artistic awareness and reflection do not necessarily imply verbalisation of artistic practice. On the contrary, many artists are obviously very aware, and show this by their conscious use of different means to affect the intended audience in intended ways. This could be described as reflecting in the modality's own terms – in its own aesthetic language so to speak. As Anders Marner (2008) points out, school does not facilitate reflection in the artistic languages themselves, but rather analyses the arts through verbal language, thereby reducing each particular kind of art to a media-neutral, generic aesthetic mash-up. Nonetheless, I would suggest that tinkering with manipulation in aesthetic communication is a possible way to practice media-specific reflection.

To let students tinker with artistic production, and experiment with manipulation for different audiences and different purposes, and also by exposing themselves to possible surprises by encountering different musics in empathic, curious and respectful ways, the subject 'music' could perhaps find a way out of the chains of an outcomes-based curriculum. As already argued, the arts construct and present new versions of (parts of) the world which are the antitheses of predefining what to learn through education (Thorgersen, 2014). To let students play with and dwell in the manipulative possibilities of different musics for different audiences and for different purposes could open up completely new ways of facilitating musical learning. A goal for music educators could be to help students develop awareness of all aspects of aesthetic communication like the Black Metal musicians described above. In this way students will be able not only to express themselves in a vacuum, but to actually participate in the contracted manipulation that is a part of aesthetic

communication. Through dwelling in the experiences of musics and experimenting with possibilities for manipulating others in a playful environment, the students would learn to play, to produce, to enjoy and also, if needed, to unmask negative manipulation. Careful use of manipulation as a tool and vehicle in music education could potentially then, not only facilitate meaningful musical experiences and expression, but also train source criticism and work as an antidote to commercials and other capitalist and counterfactual influences: Liberation through manipulation.

About the author

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