

# **CHALLENGING THE PERCEPTIONS OF ADULT LEARNERS IN FINE ART**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A major barrier to learning for students in the field of Fine Art is the extent to which their established perceptions can inhibit their ability to transform their understanding. To transform perceptions it is necessary to challenge existing frameworks, but such challenges can have dramatic psychological and social consequences both for the student and the artist/teacher. This paper explores learning in the discipline of fine art and highlights problems for learners and teachers when learners are challenged to explore their socially constructed views on the nature of reality.

## **KEY WORDS**

Meaning making, transformative learning, perception

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper is about challenging the perceptions of adult learners in the discipline of Fine Art. It covers much of the theoretical framework which underpinned my research with artist/teachers (Martin 1999) into the problems which artist/teachers face when attempting to engage mature students with the field of practice of fine art. Many adult learners in this context, and some teachers, perceive art to be the philosophically unproblematic process that re-creates a culturally agreed visual representation of reality through the use of various techniques. However, much of the teaching of Fine Art is premised on challenging students' views in order to enable them to explore the relationship between humanity and its context and to express new perceptions of this relationship through a variety of visual means. For this latter approach to succeed, it is necessary for learners to be able to question their perceptions, values and beliefs, and re-evaluate them, as part of the process of studying fine art.

It explores the areas of; Learning as Meaning Making; Learning: Having and Being; Teaching Mature Learners; The Creation of Art as a Meaning Making Process; and draws conclusions and raises questions as to the extent to which transformative learning practices can be problematic for artist/teachers in an education sphere increasingly dominated by market forces.

## LEARNING AS MAKING MEANING

A significant barrier to learning for mature students is the extent to which established perceptions, values and beliefs can filter and block their ability to transform their understanding of the world in which they live. This is particularly true when learning to be a fine artist. If transformative learning is seen as the process of continually transforming perceptions through reflection, then challenging existing frameworks, or at least suspending them, becomes a necessary part of the learning process if new meaning is to be made. Therefore it is necessary to unlearn in order to learn, that is, unlearning in the sense that you have to critically examine your constructs and be prepared to set them aside and look at things afresh.

The transformative learning process is a method by which an individual attempts to make meaning. Jarvis argues that the "process of focusing upon the 'unknowns' of human experiences begins in childhood and appears fundamental to humanity" (Jarvis, 1995, 12). He agrees with Luckmann that the individual human becomes a self by building with others an "objective and moral universe of meaning" (Luckmann cited by Jarvis, 1995, 12). The physicist and thinker David Bohm in his own quest for meaning both on the quantum level and in human thought processes wrote that:

"...the being of ourselves is meaning; the being of society is meaning. [This new view] encourages us...toward a creative attitude, and fundamentally it opens the way to the transformation of the human being because a change of meaning is a change of being".

(Bohm in Weber, 1987, 442)

As a physicist Bohm was aware that the natural order of the universe is change and he like the philosopher Krishnamurti (1991) was also aware that the process of thought, in its dependence on existing perceptions and constructs, often acted as a process for the maintenance of the status quo rather than as a process for the possibility of change. As Mezirow observed, "approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning" (Mezirow, 1991, 1). He argued that;

"Sets of habitual expectation or 'meaning perspectives' (created by ideologies, learning styles, neurotic self-deceptions) constitute codes that govern the activities of perceiving, comprehending, and remembering. The symbols that we project onto our sense perceptions are filtered through meaning perspectives. The resulting 'loaded' perception is objectified through speech. Language is a system of ideal objects in the form of signs; it has no direct relationship to the objects and events of our external world. Meaning is an interpretation, and to make meaning is to construe or interpret experience - in other words, to give it coherence. Meaning is constructed both prelinguistically, through cues and symbolic models, and through language. These two ways of construing meaning are interactive

processes involving two dimensions of awareness, the presentational and the propositional".  
(Mezirow, 1991, 4)

In terms of this research this view of perception and meaning-making is crucial to the understanding of the problems of learning about and teaching art. Distortion of visual perception by existing visual constructs is central to the problems faced in the learning and teaching of art. As Mezirow points out, there is a tendency for individuals to filter new experiences through existing structures and in order to 'avoid anxiety' or conform to peer group expectations, merely reinforce existing constructs. It is the motivation for the individual to risk the possibility of change or not to risk change which is central to their capacity to learn in a potentially transforming way. Jarvis (1992, 1995) and Mezirow (1991) both observe that it is when a person's biography does not match his or her experience, that there is the greatest incentive to critically question their existing constructs, values or beliefs for validity and that it may take a dramatic disjuncture to force the issue. It is the fostering of critical self-reflection within a challenging and supportive environment that Mezirow sees as the way of helping those who are ready to transform their meaning perspectives.

He defines a developmentally advanced meaning perspective as one that is:

- \* more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative of experience
- \* based upon full information
- \* free from both internal and external coercion
- \* open to other perspectives and points of view
- \* accepting of others as equal participants in discourse
- \* objective and rational in assessing contending arguments and evidence
- \* critically reflective of presuppositions and their source and consequences, and
- \* able to accept an informed and rational consensus as the authority for judging conflicting validity claims.

(Mezirow, 1991, 78)

This list is a set of conditions that are necessary for fostering critical self-reflection and transformative learning in dialogue with wider society. Much of Mezirow's thinking here is based on Habermas's 'Theory of Communicative Action' (1991) which though admirable in its idealism does pre-suppose the possibility of freedom from coercion, the availability of full information and the practical considerations of a consensus arising from a discourse being able to accommodate all people. However, as a set of conditions to work towards they set a tough and challenging goal for any learner or teacher. The ultimate aim of developing continuous critical reflection as a state of being is one reflected in Socrates concept of the examined life. Nussbaum (1997) argues for the cultivation of humanity through the Socratic method of questioning to test values and beliefs. She cites Socrates as saying that an 'unexamined life' is not worth living, and that the process of "...questioning is not just somewhat useful; it is an indispensable part of a

worthwhile life for any person and any citizen"(Nussbaum, 1997, 21). She observes that Socrates and his followers the Stoics were aware that many people at that time, as now, led passive lives with 'their actions and choices dictated by conventional beliefs'. The central task of educators, according to the Stoics, is to "confront the passivity of the pupil, challenging the mind to take charge of its own thought" (Nussbaum, 1997, 28).

It is such a challenge which lies at the heart of much teaching in the discipline of fine art where the student is confronted by the complexity of perception and its relationship with understanding the nature of reality. With this approach, art and its engagement is far from the unproblematic reproduction of a socially held visual representation. It is a creative and re-creative process of meaning transformation that is discussed later in this paper.

#### LEARNING : HAVING AND BEING

As Jarvis (1992) asserts, " the fact that human beings have both essence and existence, or mind/self within the body, has a major implication: they have the need both to be and to have" (Jarvis, 1992, 143). He recognises that the need to 'have' ranges from the basic physiological needs of the human organism to survive, through psychological needs of humans to develop through social relationships to the sense of 'possession' or having which 'lies at the heart of contemporary Western civilization'. The philosophy of 'having' which underlies the capitalist system has led to the development of a culture where a sense of 'being' has been defined in relation to the acquisition of commodities which in turn gives meaning and status within society. In this 'having' mode, a person's sense of belonging, worth and meaning are in direct relation to their ability to acquire commodities, and their sense of happiness lies in their ability to acquire the latest TV or car. Fulfilment becomes continual acquisition.

In contrast, Jarvis sees the process of 'being' as essentially about an " active involvement in experience through which the human essence emerges and is nourished" (Jarvis, 1992, 147). This he relates to Maslow's higher needs of relationship and self-actualization and the concept of the person as having life and changing and developing with a sense of 'becoming'. Learning is a fundamental process in the human being's journey to fulfil their potential through continually becoming, but learning is also underpinned by different concepts of purpose which, in formal systems, relate to ideas of control and inculcation and empowerment. Jarvis observes that " there is a profound difference between knowing and having knowledge. It is the difference between actively participating in the process of creating knowledge, on the one hand, and on the other hand digesting whatever others transmit" (Jarvis, 1992, 148). In this first sense knowledge, its creation and recreation, is part of a transformative process of development and change for the individual and society. In the second sense, knowledge is like a commodity, it is fixed, non-developmental, non-reflective, an object of acquisition and a process of control and reproduction. It is this concept of learning as a conditioning process which creates a false consciousness within the individual which the philosopher Krishnamurti observed was a root cause of conflict both within the individual and throughout the wider community.

" We are saying that conditioning takes place not only culturally, in the sense of religion, social morality and so on, but also through knowledge itself. Is it possible to teach students and ourselves to free the mind from knowledge and yet to use knowledge without causing the mind to function mechanically? If I were a teacher here, I would be greatly concerned how to bring about this unconditioning in myself and in the student".

(Krishnamurti, 1978 (ed), 196)

He sees much formal education as teaching people to think in culturally predetermined patterns which not only reinforce cultural differences, creating mistrust and fear, but create within the individual an endless learning loop which filters all new experiences through conditioned perceptions which serve only to reinforce existing views and prejudices. He asserts the need to challenge fundamental thought processes through a process of 'unconditioning' which is not unlike the ideas of Freire. As Jarvis (1992) points out, the process of self-actualization as proposed by Maslow can be seen as selfish, if unrelated to the needs of the wider community. Krishnamurti supports this view in that he observes that such a process, if only a selfish act of ego satisfaction, ultimately leads to disappointment and conflict, with self-knowledge portrayed in 'having' mode. The great 'Hatha Yoga' guru B.K.S. Iyengar (1994) however, recognises that there is a difficult path to tread between a 'philosophical' and self-development life and a 'practical' life. He acknowledges that learning in the form of yoga is " firstly for individual growth, but through individual growth, society and community develop" (Iyengar, 1988, 9). This view is mirrored by Handy (1990) in his concept of 'responsible selfishness'. What all these thinkers share is a concept of individual development through learning which values not selfish self-actualisation, which is philosophically a contradiction in terms anyway, but personal development which benefits the growth of the whole community.

Ultimately, Krishnamurti's (1990 ed) concept of an 'integrated life', Maslow's concept of 'self-actualization', Freire's (1972) concept of 'conscientization', Nussbaum's (1997) ideas of 'cultivating humanity' based on the Socratic idea of the 'examined life', and Mezirow's (1991) concept of 'transformative learning', all emphasise the need to foster learning in people to develop them in Jarvis's (1992) 'being' mode rather than the 'having' mode. The type of education proposed by Nussbaum (1997), Mezirow (1990 and 1991), and Brookfield (1987), aims to address the complex needs of individuals and of the modern societies which they inhabit, namely the development of critically reflective thinkers. This contrasts completely with pressures from global market capitalism and existing socio-political power structures for an education system which is controlling, and reproductive and where knowledge is a commodity. Jarvis argues that :

"Education is, therefore, faced with an unresolvable dilemma... Education is frequently regarded as a humanistic process... in which individual students learn and grow and develop. It is regarded as a major element of being - as a process

through which the human essence emerges from existence in active participative relationship with others, some of whom might be experts. Yet the very nature of society in which education occurs emphasizes the having mode and expects repetitive action and non-reflective learning so that it can produce people who can rehearse what they have acquired. As a result education has been forced to adopt the characteristics of contemporary society. In many ways, this market approach to education is acclaimed as the most efficient and beneficial to the society as a whole. But the paradox is that it seeks to implement the lower levels of learning and to reward the having of knowledge rather than being and the higher levels of learning and human development."

(Jarvis, 1992, 153-154)

With pressure from the speed of technological change and allied economic needs for a skilled workforce and compliant consumers, combined with pressures for structural stability and social reproduction, it is not surprising that types of education relating to the 'having' mode are in the ascendant and that more liberal humanistic approaches relating to human development in the 'being' mode have been marginalised.

#### TEACHING AND ADULT LEARNERS

Mezirow, in a modern echo of the Stoics and with a challenge similar to that of Nussbaum, demands that " every adult educator has a responsibility for fostering critical self-reflection and helping learners to plan to take action" (Mezirow, 1990, 357). He fully acknowledges the contextual limiting factors of institutional or disciplinary attitudes but nevertheless challenges adult teachers to take an empowering and liberating approach to the development of learners.

Brookfield (1986) observes that it is " too easy to see the job of the facilitator as one concerned solely with assisting adults to meet those educational needs that they themselves perceive and express as meaningful and important" (Brookfield, 1986, 123). He further argues that:

"To act as a resource person to adults who are unaware of belief systems, bodies of knowledge, or behavioural possibilities other than those that they have critically assimilated since childhood is to condemn such adults to remaining within existing paradigms of thought and action. It is misconceived to talk of the self-directedness of learners who are unaware of alternative ways of thinking, perceiving, or behaving. Such learners can indeed express felt needs to educators, but such needs often will be perceived and articulated from within a narrow and constrained paradigm."

(Brookfield, 1986, 124)

Brookfield's view of adults as 'unaware' of their own conditioning relates closely to the stages of personal development as expressed in yoga where the individual is seen

initially as psychologically in a state of sleeping. Though yogic concepts of the search for meaning have fundamental philosophical differences to western thought, the concepts of the psychological journey towards understanding or making meaning of ones' life, are very similar. The hatha yoga teacher and writer Richard Hittleman (1976) describes the process of 'awakening', as arising usually from some event in life which causes the individual to question his or her view of the world similar to Jarvis (1995), and that the "awakened being functions in a condition in which he is still largely subject to the dominance of the ordinary mind" (Hittleman, 1976, 31).

He then suggests that individuals realise that they need help to travel the 'path' and look for a teacher or 'guide' to help them. Following this argument, the adult educator's right to challenge students to awaken, could be taken simplistically from their very presence on a course. Given the range of possible motivations for students' attendance in AE this view could be seen as instrumental and patronising on the part of the educator. However, Freire, Brookfield and Hittleman share the view of individuals in that they see many adults as having a 'false consciousness' which hides from them their true needs. Brookfield concludes that, as educators, we therefore "cannot always accept adults' definition of needs as the operational criterion for our development of curriculum, design of programs, or evaluation of success. There are occasions when we may feel impelled to prompt adults to consider alternatives to their present way of thinking and living" (Brookfield, 1986, 124-125). This 'prompt to consider alternatives may not just come from a teacher's educational beliefs but may also be inherent in their disciplinary approach or field of practice.

Brookfield's idea of what a teacher of adults should be, links closely with Hittleman's idea of a 'guru' as the 'guide on the path' and Daloz's concept of a Mentor:

"Mentors are guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and point out unexpected delights along the way. There is a certain luminosity about them, and they often pose as magicians in tales of transformation, for magic is a word given to what we cannot see, and we can rarely see across the gulf."  
(Daloz, 1990, 17)

Daloz suggests that mentors do three distinct things in that "they support, they challenge, and they provide vision" (Daloz, 1990, 212). For him the concept of support is similar to that used by Mezirow and Brookfield in providing the learner with a safe and supportive environment from which they can risk development and change. The challenge is the creation of a 'cognitive dissonance', the formation of a gap between the learners 'perceptions and expectations' which encourages the learner to change and develop new understandings. Finally the mentor helps the learner to move towards a new vision but for Daloz this is "not simply the ability to perceive a different world but actually to

apprehend 'reality' in a fuller, more comprehensive way" (Daloz, 1990, 230). For him the concept of vision is not limited to new understanding, but is "in its broadest sense...the field on which the dialectical game between the old self and the new can be played" (Daloz, 1990, 230). It is this internal dialogue of the process of 'awakening' which Hittleman (1976) sees as frequently generating 'profound conflict' within the learner.

Teachers who challenge students and induce in them a sense of insecurity and pain, may well be the focus of those student's frustrations and confusion, not only as part of the normal course of such transformative development processes, but also because such discomfort runs counter to the expected culture of learning. The learning contract between the learner and the teacher is often unclear and full of conflicting pressures including varying student motivations, socio-political pressures and the beliefs and values of the adult educator who may themselves have conflicting internal philosophies arising from their educational and subject specialist fields of practice. It is this environment in which artist/teachers find themselves when working in the state education system. The advice offered by Brookfield to teachers who find themselves faced with negative student responses to challenges for change, is that "teachers should respect the learner's individuality and remember that adult education is a collaborative, transactional encounter in which the objectives, methods, and evaluation should be negotiated by all concerned" (Brookfield, 1986, 126).

Perry (1970, 9-10) developed a hierarchy of developmental stages that related perceptions of education to intellectual and ethical development. Perry's hierarchy provides a good insight into why artist/teachers who challenge their student's sense of reality may create considerable tension both within the student, and the student teacher relationship. Level 1 describes the student/learner as seeing the world in polar terms of 'we-right-good' vs. 'other-wrong-bad'. Where right answers exist in absolute terms, and where the knowledge held by authority is transferred by teachers. Perception of diversity of opinion and uncertainty are seen as 'unwarranted confusion in poorly qualified authorities'. By levels 4 & 5 learners see uncertainty as a legitimate state and values and knowledge as 'contextual and relativistic'. By the final level 9, the learner experiences 'affirmation of identity' and a commitment to an ongoing activity of meaning making through which they express their life.

Stage 1, which mirrors what de Bono (1990) calls the 'rock logic' of absolutes, is reflected in learning situations where the student thinks that there is a 'right way' to put on a wash of colour or draw an apple, and it is the teacher's role to show them how, to provide the absolute answer. This is the level of engagement found in programmes where the knowledge to be passed on is absolute. When both students and teachers engage at this level, a symbiotic relationship is formed where everyone is happy. The students learn how to paint or draw to a formula that is superficially successful, and the teacher is revered for enabling them. Little challenge is involved and the power relationship of

student to pupil is maintained and a dependency model of learning established or reinforced. The student learns skills but never has to accept the responsibility for their own inquiry or meaning making.

Artist/teachers who challenge this comfortable process and dare to suggest that absolute right and wrong are a fiction, are often in turn met with a questioning of their competence. Given choices, the student wants to know which is the right answer and tutors who fail to supply this can be criticised as bad teachers who just don't know the answers themselves. I and many of my colleagues, have faced this criticism, sometimes from whole groups of students who are unprepared to risk entering a world of unknowns. It is facilitating a student's understanding onto stage 5, where knowledge and values are begun to be seen as contextual and relativistic, that is necessary if they are to fully engage the field of practice of fine art. It is only when they can accept different visual interpretations of the visual world that they can begin to explore the visual world and make their own visual meanings. By stage 9 learners have an ongoing commitment to challenging their own perceptions and continually re-making their meaning which is a reasonable definition of the fine art process.

With many subjects in the education sphere there is little or no such challenge to student's perceptions required, but in art this challenge is necessary at an early stage if students are to begin to develop personal processes of visual inquiry and interpretation. Art is an intellectually high level activity but this level of engagement is often confused with the level of technical skills which a learner may possess in a particular art or craft related area. In effect, an access, foundation or first year of a degree programme through its artist/teachers is attempting to move student's intellectual understanding through Perry's developmental stages within a relatively short period of time. This development, though potentially enabled through the study of art, relates to core concepts and values held by learners, and as such, effects not just their learning of art but their understanding of their relationship to life in general. It is the depth of the challenge that makes such teaching in art potentially uncomfortable for the learner and artist/teacher.

## THE CREATION OF ART AS A MEANING MAKING PROCESS

The nature of art can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Art seen as the reproduction of the dominant socialized construct of visual reality, is in effect, art as copying. At its most extreme this was represented by the approach of the Victorian drawing academies and their attendant stale academic values which artists in all schools of the modernist movement rebelled against. In a pictorial and philosophical sense it recognises no conceptual problem with the reproduction of visual reality as a commonly held certainty, and the artist's role is one of a technician and craftsman who through their skills reinforce the dominant visual construct. For the artist as teacher of art as reproduction, the teaching process is also philosophically unproblematic in that it only requires the

inculcation of specific skills and techniques relating to materials and their use and application to an accepted visual formula.

Art, however, can also be seen as a creative or re-creative process which is explorative by nature and is ultimately a meaning making process. There are many views as to what is happening when this form of art is being created. Arnheim (1954, 1969) argues that perception is not a separate function to thought but that the whole process is one of 'Visual Thinking' which is image based though may relate to intellectually expressible ideas or emotions. Eisner 1972 takes a broad approach to art education in a similar vein to Arnheim seeing its importance in "...encouraging us to see the interrelationship of things", and to help "...enable us to make sense of the world'.(Eisner, 1972,281) He sees the engagement in the art process as sensitizing people to the world around them and thus indirectly in making society a better place through increased awareness of other worldviews. In 'The Enlightened Eye' (1991) Eisner develops his theory of Connoisseurship defining it as "...the art of appreciation" (Eisner, 1991, 63) which he sees as a process of 'epistemic seeing' based on knowledge gained through sight, by which he means all of the senses.

There is a danger in the descriptions of the art process discussed above that the process of creation and inquiry in art is reduced to a simplistic linear model. With the espoused intention of giving a rational defence to the beleaguered art education sector, Best, in his book *The Rationality of Feeling* (1992), attempts a positivist defence of what is primarily a phenomenologically based activity. In seeing and attempting to define art as a purely cognitive, conscious and ultimately rational process, he falls into the trap of someone 'looking in from the outside' and misses much of the subjectivity and its attendant subtle complexity which are crucial to the art process and which it is necessary to experience in order to fully understand. There is indeed, a considerable level of rational, conscious thought involved in the art process, and what Best calls the 'myth' of subjectivism has done a great disservice to art, both in the present rationalistic education climate and within the wider social community. However, visual art cannot be rationalised and explained wholly in terms of verbal reasoning, as words and logical argument can only ever approximate to the meaning given by a different medium of communication as represented for example by a certain set of colours and shapes in juxtaposition.

John Briggs and Frank McCluskey observe that artists have "grounded themselves in the ambivalence of meanings and have worked to reveal to us the nuances and uncertainties that infiltrate our apparently absolute perceptions and truths about life". They call this 'omnivalence', and define it as, "a mental state in which many meanings converge in so many ways that one feels the immensity of meaning without being able to pin down any absolute meaning specifically".(Briggs and McCluskey - Pylkkanen ed.1989, 279) They continue to give examples of ways in which individuals can question their "absolutes" or constructs, and these have a great deal in common with those which are espoused by Mezirow et al., (1990) for developing critical reflection in adults. The word omnivalence

is formed from two roots, omni meaning a compound of all things and valence which is a scientific term relating to the capacity or active force of certain elements to combine. In relation to visual artists this could be interpreted as their ability to hold many different meanings and distil a visual image from these or their ability to see the world as many different meanings and create a variety of images to express these different visions. The idea of omnivalence, in contrast to Best's stand-point, does not refute the relevance or worth of subjectivity but refers to a process which includes a broader range and richness of mental activity and recognises the possibility of the importance of that which may not be expressible or understandable in words.

It is this fundamental challenge to visual and other conceptual certainties which lies at the heart of the teaching and learning process used in relation to art which is viewed as a process of visual inquiry or meaning making. It is the discomfort created in others by the challenge to held certainties which creates problems for the artist as communicator through his or her work and the artist as teacher. It is in the role as teacher that the artist, through a series of processes, confronts and challenges the art students' assumptions about the visual world and their view of reality. This is a fundamental part of the learning process of becoming a meaning making artist in the sense which Briggs and McClusky describe, for if art is about the creation and re-creation of realities then the artist has to learn how to question and change their existing constructs as a working process in itself.

## CONCLUSIONS AND UNCERTAINTIES

There is a link between the views of reality espoused by some areas of Quantum Physics, Biology, Art, Yoga, Philosophy and constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. These views covering the relationship of the individual to that reality, and methods by which individuals can investigate their own relationship to their reality in a critical way, share a common concept of the understanding of reality as perception based and perception dependent. There is no 'one truth' to be discovered as in the scientific determinism of the positivist paradigm. Rather as Danah Zohar (1993) suggests, the 'wave/particle' duality demonstrates that the nature of reality is complex and its understanding, context and perspective specific. In such a universe of reality, meaning making needs to become a continual process of re-evaluation, and to achieve this, individuals will have to continually challenge their perceptions to transform their understanding in an ever-changing relationship to reality.

However it must be acknowledged that the challenges to the individual going through a transformative learning process are not without cost to that learner or their teacher. Though for many students it is a liberating process, it can lead to a confrontation of fundamental beliefs that can have life changing implications and create considerable emotional turmoil within the individual learner going through the experience. The

learners emotions can encompass confusion, anguish, frustration and anger, the latter emotion often directed at the teacher. The question arises, do we as teachers need to find a different way to acknowledge and deal with the anger and confusion that the student has when going through this process. It may be necessary to attempt to explain beforehand the nature of the learning to be undertaken and its possible consequences and to agree a form of learning contract. This becomes especially significant with government driven initiatives on quality in education which often accent student satisfaction and in an environment where the student as customer wants the commodity or qualification (having mode) and challenges to their beliefs, values and worldview (being mode) seem outside the learning contract. The development of a learners personal philosophy and practice is core to becoming an artist yet this is not a finite outcome but rather an ongoing transformative process. The danger and challenge to teachers who adopt transformative learning approaches in their teaching will be how to continue to deliver a high quality developmental educational experience if it involves upsetting students, threatening retention figures and running counter to the commodity culture?

Many of the issues raised in this paper present opportunities for research as little is known about the learning process in Fine Art or, consequently, the best processes for teachers to facilitate that learning. Although this discussion has been carried out in the context of Fine Art, in other disciplines where the phenomenological paradigm is practised, such as Quantum Physics, Biology, Philosophy, Social Sciences and Education, there are similar issues related to the need to challenge perspectives before transformative learning, can take place, thus enabling the learners to engage fully in the learning process.

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