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**ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF MIMESIS AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR EDUCATION
THROUGH THE ARTS IN THE PRESCHOOL PERIOD (in press)**

Abstract:

In an age in which art creativity is deemed less important than acquiring competencies aimed at technological development, providing clear answer to a question, why and how may different art practices exert an influence on the full development of a child's personality, is truly crucial. In order to demonstrate the meaning of artistic experience in general education, one must seek arguments supporting the intrinsic value of the artistic experience. As I already discussed the meaning of artistic experience as a means of communication providing both the artist and the art consumer/recipient the opportunity for personal fulfilment in one of my previous articles, I would first like to highlight Aristotle's concept of mimesis and its role in education through the arts as part of the inductive educational approach. In the final part I further present anecdotal proof supporting the thesis of children being capable of experiencing true art even in the preschool period, relating an event that took place in the Vodmat kindergarten, Ljubljana, Slovenia, during our implementation of the inductive educational approach.

Introduction

Can children's playful creativity in the preschool period be regarded as artistic? Are children capable of appreciating art and various activities involved in art or should they only engage in adapted, i.e. children's art? Why and how may different art practices exert an influence on the full development of a child's personality?

In an age in which art and scientific curiosity are not a prominent part of educational systems and are deemed less important than acquiring competencies aimed at technological development, providing clear answers and solutions to the afore-mentioned questions is truly crucial, especially bearing in mind the faltering power of romantic humanist answers to those questions in the last few decades.

In the resounding publication *Gifts of the Muse – Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts* (2004) and Koopman's study (2005) the authors of the two works extrapolate the conclusion that in order to demonstrate the meaning of artistic experience in general education, one must seek arguments supporting the intrinsic value of the artistic experience (Koopman 2005, p. 87). As I already discussed the meaning of artistic experience as a means of communication providing both the artist and the art consumer/recipient the opportunity for personal fulfilment in one of my previous articles (Kroflič 2009), I would first like to highlight Aristotle's concept of mimesis and its role in education through the arts as part of the inductive educational approach. In the final part I further present anecdotal proof supporting the thesis of children being capable of experiencing true art even in the preschool

period, relating an event that took place in the Vodmat kindergarten, Ljubljana, Slovenia, during our implementation of the inductive educational approach.

Aristotle's conception of aesthetic experience as mimesis

If we are to understand the role of Aristotle's theory of art (aesthetics) in contemporary concepts of education *through* the arts that differ significantly from the general concept of education *about* art, it is vital to mention the subtle polemics between Plato and Aristotle regarding the role of art, in fact mirroring much deeper ontological and epistemological differences between the two authors.

Let us begin by examining the artistic portrayal of the afore-mentioned difference in the fresco *The School of Athens* painted at the beginning of the 16th century by Raphael (Vatican, 1510-1511). In the central part of the fresco we find the two philosophers walking side by side. Plato has his finger pointed towards the sky, to the world of eternal ideas seen by him as the ultimate source of truth about human existence, while Aristotle seems to be emphasizing the importance of examining immediate reality in order to uncover the truth hiding under the surface of things.

The answer to the question where to look for the truth about the world and our existence was an important point of disagreement between the two authors and their understanding of artistic *mimesis*, even though both feel that attentive contemplation and the imitation/depiction of reality are core methods of artistic creativity. If, as Plato felt, the truth of the world and human existence is to be found in the world of eternal ideas, our immediate reality presenting its mere shadow, then mimetic representation of reality is even further away from the truth than reality itself. "The poet then is only capable of portraying the image of things as rendered by the senses, unable to reach their true nature..." (Vrečko 1994, p. 203). That is why Plato, who was a poet in his early years and as a philosopher exhibited a remarkable perceptiveness for the poetic dimension of philosophical language, ascribed high value only to those examples of poetry following the highest pedagogical, moral and political standards, while there was no space for aesthetic contemplation in his philosophy (ibid., p. 205).

For Aristotle, on the other hand, the universal essence of phenomena is a mere reflection of their inner necessity, their inner determinacy and not a separate world of ideas. Reality is imperfect in Aristotle's view as well, however, art strives to reach beneath this imperfect outside form that is available to the senses and tries to unveil the deeper essence of things. Hence mimesis transcends mere mechanical imitation – it represents the act of active creativity, entering into the spirit of its subject matter, the active participation in the creation of an event.

Or in the words of Goethe: it is life as seen through the eyes of an artist, reality, freed from all contingency and outside appearance (Gantar 2005, pp. 33-38).

Despite agreeing with Plato about the main method of artistic creativity being the representation of reality, Aristotle perceives art as a part of a creative process, which can be ascribed value as such. This process is valuable not merely due to the fact that it produces

something beautiful, with beauty being one of the sources of human happiness (Aristotle 1995, p. 43), but also because poets – although with tools different from philosophers’ – are capable of depicting the inner reality of phenomena (Vrečko 1994, p. 215). Aristotle thus views poetry – in the broader meaning encompassing all forms of art – as invaluable per se, since it holds the potential for the creation of beauty and unveils the truth hiding in the phenomena portrayed on the other. As will be seen later on, these two reasons hold equal importance for pedagogical argumentation in favour of the aesthetic experience, since the Aristotelian concept of *aesthetic mimesis* not only supports the children’s right to enjoying beautiful environments, using artistic means for a deeper understanding of oneself, other people and natural phenomena, but also points to the importance of cathartic release of frustrations that children inevitably feel in their everyday environments.

However, let us start at the beginning. In his famous work *Poetics*, acknowledged as the first comprehensive work in the field of aesthetics, Aristotle attributes the emergence of poetry to two important characteristics of human nature:

“For it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to engage in mimesis (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understandings) . . . this is why people enjoy looking at images, because through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means . . . For, if one happens not to have seen the subject before, the image will not give pleasure *qua* mimesis, but because of its execution or colour, or for some other such reason.

Because mimesis comes naturally to us, as do melody and rhythm . . . in the earliest times those with special natural talents for these things gradually progressed and brought poetry into being from improvisations.” (Aristotle 2005, pp. 38-39)

Thus it can be seen that according to Aristotle human beings are different from all other living creatures in their ability to portray reality (*mimesis*), which represents one of the main forms of human action in addition to being able to create something new (Vrečko 1994, p. 210).

Mimesis of an object, person or an event is invaluable in providing one of the most important ways of acquiring meanings. One of the most surprising Aristotle’s ideas can be found in his view that despite its imitative nature, art tells us more about the portrayed piece of reality, i.e. an object, person or an event, than a positivist historical account, and in this respect art can be seen as closely resembling the most elevated activity of the mind – philosophy (Aristotle 2005, p. 59).

If Aristotle sees the first reason for the emergence of poetry in the epistemological value of art (art as a way of “learning” or “inferring”), the second cause tells of human attraction to beauty, which Aristotle illustrates with the appreciation of a pleasant melody and the rhythm of poetry. Art theoreticians later recognized this as an important argument in favour of the inner dimensions of art enabling us to view art as valuable in itself regardless of its message

or any other outside purpose it may acquire and in view of which it may be regarded as “true art”.

Aristotle thus provided argumentation for the inherent value of engaging in art (either as active creators or acting as art consumers/recipients). In the pedagogical context it could thus be said that art “enriches children’s/adolescents’ souls” and is linked to their immediate well-being as well as their development. Pedagogical arguments speaking in favour of the value of art are usually regarded as external, “inferior” arguments and sometimes as similar to morally-political/ideological arguments that did art more harm than good in the past. However, if we are able to find “pedagogical value” in a practice that is originally artistic, we can avoid such criticism. A work of art is valuable in pedagogical situations not because it would carry a moral message (as typical for fables and fairytales) or contribute to enforcing the dominant aesthetics in a specific environment (criteria for the difference between “true art” and “trashy art”), but due to the artistic phenomenon itself and its promotion of traits valued in general personality development. As we are particularly interested in the prosocial and moral development of children in the pre-school period, let us continue by further examining some prominent highlights in Aristotle’s analysis of poetry.

Creativity and the experience of beauty as things pleasant by nature and a source of happiness

As can be seen in the afore-mentioned argumentation, Aristotle ascribes human beings the instinct for appreciation of beautiful colours, melody and rhythm. However, beauty is not the only source of pleasure people strive for in their lives, nor is it the final end of human existence. In examining ways for reaching happiness, Aristotle underlines the meaning of spiritual goods, the most important one being “rightful action” or “doing well” since “‘activity in conformity with virtue’ involves ‘virtue’” (Aristotle 1994, p. 39). One can admittedly find pleasure in external goods or rightful action, but “things pleasant by nature” are primarily a function of good and noble action. This also includes “actions in conformity with virtue [...] that are pleasant essentially as well as pleasant to lovers of the noble”. Additionally, “they are also of course both good and noble” (ibid, p. 41).

Even though the relation between what is good and what is beautiful is certainly not as simple as described in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, the part relevant to our discussion is Aristotle’s view on experiencing beauty either as part of the process of creation or in the role of art consumers, as he feels that it is the most natural source of human pleasure and happiness. In other words, in Aristotle’s view artistic activities represent the most prominent of virtues, as does the appreciation and pleasure found in a work of art, since the latter, as will be discussed further on, enables catharsis, and in Vrečko's words, catharsis represents the completion of a work of art (or in Aristotle’s case Greek tragedy) on the subjective level of the viewer’s experience (Vrečko 1994, p. 223).

Aesthetic mimesis as a means of accessing the truth of phenomena by employing the epistemological method of induction (imitating human action by creating stories revealing deeper meanings of human action itself)

In his argumentation of art as a *mimetic activity*, Aristotle makes two points relevant for our discussion of the role of art in education. The first is related to the question of how “imitation” can be related to “creative quest for the hidden truth”, i.e. creating something new. The second point of emphasis is linked to a specific epistemological approach, generally quite different from the philosophical and scientific quest for truth, and by holding the assumption that art can unveil the truth of various phenomena, it can be concluded that artistic creativity is of equal importance as philosophical contemplation and can be seen as complementary to the philosophical and scientific ways of studying reality.

An interesting exploration of the creative nature of artistic mimesis can be found in Rakić's 1911 doctoral dissertation *Education Through Play and Art*. The author divides all human activities into those aiming at repetition and those involving change or transformation, seen by him as two main modes of adaptation to human living environment. In Rakić's opinion, an inherent paradox of education is that it is not primarily based on activities involving change, but rather activities involving repetition and acquiring knowledge, abilities, skills, and habits transferred to the coming generations by adults. Therefore encouraging children's play and artistic activity is one of the crucial dimensions of education that facilitates children's transformation abilities. In Rakić's view, symbolic play and art are examples of transformation activities despite their mimetic nature, as they possess the potential of changing reality due to their “tendency for imitation of reality, but under *freely changed conditions*. In view of its content, art goes even further by depicting life in certain *fictitious conditions* ...” (Rakić 1946, p. 21). Rakić sees the positive pedagogical influence of art and symbolic play in “. . . helping people to keep *an open-minded view* of the world around them despite everyday repetition, reinstating *common sense* as the opposite of blind prejudice and cruel dogmatism and demonstrating the possibility of inner *freedom* and *innateness* with the entirety of its actions. Such influences are naturally the most important in one's *childhood* . . .” (ibid., p. 23).

In discussing the Aristotelian concept of aesthetic *mimesis*, it is therefore important to note its creative instead of merely mechanical nature. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle writes about the artistic image transcending its realistic counterpart as it not only describes the past and present state of things, but also includes the portrayal of “the kind of things that people say and think; the kind of things that ought to be the case” (Aristotle 2005, pp. 126-127). Gantar comments Aristotle's claim by adding that “if we depict an event within the given limitations as an inevitable consequence of previous events and circumstances, then this is no longer a passive constation, instead constituting an active reawakening of a true event not in its uniqueness, but in its absolute validity.” (Gantar 2005, p. 32) Therefore mimesis is more than mere imitation – it is the act of creation, immersion into phenomena and the depiction of a certain event, human or object as the artist sees it, at the same time reflecting various contextual

factors that have influenced the story portrayed. And it is only when we are able to recognize the main causes and effects of the accounted story that we have worked our way to the truth.

If the creative process as a mimetic act is able to provide a path leading to the truth of a certain phenomenon or an event, one cannot neglect the importance of the aesthetic method as part of artistic activity. Art (especially in the case of classic Greek tragedy) was not the only form of human action aimed at discovering the truth in Aristotle's time and thus Aristotle had to confront art with philosophy and positivist science, the main paradigm of the latter in his work presented by historiography. In the famous ninth chapter of *Poetics*, Aristotle presents a provocative idea even for today, claiming that "poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history", since "poetry [like philosophy] relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars" (Aristotle 2005, p. 59). However, philosophy and art differ in the language employed in unveiling general truths. If the main method of philosophy is describing human existence by using broader categories, tragedy employs another kind of vocabulary, bringing us closer to the truth by depicting a specific action instead of general characteristics of the main actors. "It is human activity (*praxis*) that is of vital importance; and the activity portrayed by tragedy is called plot or *mythos*. Mythos in Aristotle's view is just as important as fabula. And it is mythos, the purposeful composition and combination of various events and mishaps, that is the most important element of poetry, it is the 'first principle and, as it were, soul of tragedy'. When poets create mythos, they also create characters, diction through which these characters reveal themselves and the main ideas they communicate. The main aim of poetry then is representation of an action (*mimesis praxeos*) as mythos . . . mythos can thus be said to be the main principle and the soul not only in the case of tragedy, but of all poetry." (Gantar 2005, p. 27)

In his examination of ethical questions, Aristotle's final aim is not the formulation of ethical norms and principles and therein the pillars of moral judgement, but is primarily interested in the conditions of ethical action, as concrete action in his view represents the actualization of virtue. On the concrete level morality is realised within community, especially so in friendships. Since human beings are different from gods and unable to persist in moral judgement incessantly, they need examples of moral action, mirrors of sort and those examples can best be provided by "friends similar in virtue" (Gigon, 1964, p. 58) as well as the artistic representation of moral actions, portrayed in Aristotle's time primarily by Greek tragedy. Thus artistic induction and relations with others are complementary to the philosophical, predominately deductive, contemplation.

Empathic imagination as a way of entering life stories/experiences of the Other as a different human being and catharsis as completion of the artistic experience on the subjective level of the viewer

As mentioned before, Aristotle in his *Poetics* primarily refers to Greek tragedy as the example of art materialized. What makes theatre one of the most important forms of art even today is the fact that a play represents reality in a way that enables direct contact between artists and the audience. In this way theatre can provide an artistic event that is completed by its

portrayal of beauty on the objective level and by the deeply felt experience of the audience, which Aristotle called *catharsis*, on the subjective level (Vrečko 1994, p. 229). However, in order to reach catharsis as a special kind of purification enabling release from the pressure of tragic emotions evoked by the story, one first needs to experience that which is described by the concept of *artistic imagination*.

Artistic imagination offers us a glimpse into the world of other people by entering imaginary, “as if” worlds created by writers, painters, sculptors, film directors, choreographers and composers (Greene 1995, p. 4). Imagination consists of many dimensions that hold value for education since “. . . in the process, the reader learns to have respect for the hidden contents of that inner world, seeing its importance in defining a creature as fully human” (Nussbaum 1997, p. 90). Imagination thus provides art consumers the opportunity of delving into the psyche of literary heroes and the circumstances of their story, liberating them from stereotypical perception as well as facilitating empathy and compassion. Since compassion also involves feeling vulnerable, the reader may feel that a fate similar to that of the (fictional) character could perhaps befall him/her in the future, resulting in their willingness to offer big-hearted support or help, thinking: “Something like this could happen to me as well and this is how I would like to be treated.” The great value of empathic imagination in today’s world is linked to the empathic recognition of the social position of all those who are different, outcasts, invisible in the global world full of difference (Kroflič 2010, in press). A while ago I wrote:

“Immersion in the artistically created character or event, sympathizing with the character’s fate, cancellation of ego fantasies about oneself as the centre of the world, contemplating on events we might never experience ourselves, the ability of creating visions of possible worlds in which we are able to surpass our original selfishness and unfairness are all components of imagination and capacities enforcing our ethical consciousness.” (Kroflič 2007, p. 22)

According to Aristotle, the crux of aesthetic/tragic catharsis has to do with tragedy mimicking a grave and well-rounded action in a heightened language and the form of theatre that by inspiring pity and fear facilitates purgation of such emotions: “Since the one is felt for the undeserved victim of adversity, the other for one like ourselves (pity for the undeserving, fear for one like ourselves)” (Aristotle 1995, p. 71).

In Aristotelian conceptions there are two vital factors facilitating the conditions for the emergence of the viewer’s artistic imagination and consequent catharsis. The first emerges when one is deeply moved by the fate of the tragic hero and a piece of art shatters our routine perceptions, seizing the moment and replacing boredom with wonder over the uniqueness of human fate as well as giving rise to the question “Why?” (Greene 1995, p. 6) The other factor is closely linked to the assumption that the artistic audience recognizes itself in the duality of the internal and the external, the body and the soul (Vrečko 1994, p. 237). This could also be described as the duality of the external and otherness hiding in the core of one’s identity. The essence of aesthetic catharsis is the purgation of emotions caused by the immersion of the

viewer into the story (as well as the immersion of the artist when creating the main action of the story by combining different voices in her/his mind, as shown by Bakhtin's very convincing analysis of Dostoevsky's novels) by bringing to light hidden parts of our own psyche otherwise hidden due to the routine of our everyday lives. It is through facing the question of how one would feel in a situation similar to the one portrayed in the tragedy, or how one would act in a similar position that, in the words of Jung, we are given the chance of encountering the hidden aspects of the human soul, otherness hiding behind ego perceptions of oneself and a deeper truth of one's own existence.

Aesthetic mimesis and catharsis with their interweaving of aesthetic experiencing of beauty and enforcing good through catharsis are perhaps one of the best ways of looking for deeper truths of the human soul. The aesthetic representation of fictional characters' actions enables empathic imagination not because it would employ pretentious morale, but due to its purposeful relation of stories/acts that could happen to us. Empathic imagination can awaken virtues in the viewer or offer the opportunity of overcoming one's fears and insecurities. During the implementation of the inductive approach to moral development in the Vodmat kindergarten both dimensions were present, the first in shaping the sense of respect towards all living beings by children's empathic encounter with the story *Videk's Shirt* (a fairy tale carrying a message that one should treat all living creatures with love and the animals will repay people for their kindness in one way or another); while the second can be seen in the case of a four and a half-year old girl who was able to link Munch's painting *The Scream* to a painful experience in her own family and "personalize" the painting by adding the person in the painting a pink scarf – just like the one her mommy had worn when she experienced severe mental problems. This speaks in favour of our hypothesis that the Aristotelian aspects of artistic experience can indeed be recognized as an important means of inductive education, provided ~~when~~ we understand education as the cultivation of the soul and view art as a means of enriching the soul.

Basic ideas of inductive approach to prosocial and moral development of the preschool child

Among the alternative theoretical and practical theories that have influenced the author of this work in developing a comprehensive inductive approach, it is especially important to note Hoffman's theory about the development of empathy and his work on inductive discipline (Hoffman 2000), contemporary views on moral responsibility (Kroflič 2007) as well as the concept of recognizing the child as a competent human being (Kroflič 2010 – in press), the links between Korthagen's model of realistic approach to teachers' education and Aristotle's epistemological switch from deduction to induction (Kroflič 2009), the main principles of relational pedagogy (Kroflič 2007 a) and the educational approach of Reggio Emilia (Kroflič 2010 a – in press). I have moreover intensively studied the meaning of art in education since 2007, incorporating the latter into the emerging comprehensive inductive educational approach.

From the concept of inductive discipline . . .

The inductive approach to disciplining children was first described by Martin Hoffman (2000) in the late 1960s as he was conducting research on the main strategies of disciplining children within the context of the family. Based on his work on the development of empathy as the primary source of children's prosocial behaviour, he viewed his model of discipline as more appropriate than the authoritative-assertive model generally accepted as the most appropriate one by the then theory. The main difference between the two modes of interventions in situations requiring discipline is that the reaction to a child misbehaving would in the case of the authoritative-assertive style typically include judging the child's actions, invoking a preconceived norm or rule right from the start ("you know we have a rule not to do this"), while inductive discipline recommends expressing disapproval of the child's misconduct, bringing attention to the distress of the person who was hurt by him/her and making it visible to the wrongdoer, which facilitates the activation of mechanisms evoking empathic response/distress of the wrongdoer and her/his feeling of empathic guilt ("look, how you made this person feel. . ."; in Kroflič 2010 a – in press). The distress caused by empathic guilt felt by the child who misbehaved generally results in children wanting to fix their wrongdoings and thus alleviate their emotional distress.

In his work Hoffman proved that inductive discipline approach is the most fruitful among the existing models in aiding the development of empathic abilities, prosocial motivation and moral judgement, while his findings were further supported by Krevans and Gibbs in mid-1990s (1996). The psychological dimension of Hoffman's theory on the development of empathy was also supported by N. Eisenberg (2003 etc.) and her studies of the meaning of emotions for one's prosocial orientation.

. . . towards developing a comprehensive inductive educational approach

In order to develop a comprehensive paradigm of inductive approach in education, we need a clear definition of the role of the adult in educational situations and other theoretical elements, like the answer to the question about the essential elements of moral responsibility (what we aim for in education), the rudiments of ethical sensibility and motivation for prosocial action (anthropological basis for prosocial behaviour and morality as a starting point for encouraging moral development), what the best environment for the development of the prosocial and moral orientation of a child may be and which methodical elements to employ. Naturally, the comprehensive paradigm of the inductive approach in education includes a broader array of different educational activities and goes beyond mere intervention in conflicts.

The most drastic shift in the conceptualization of moral responsibility in postmodern times was caused by Levinas and his provocative claim that morale does not signify a subject's view on following social rules and ethical principles, but rather a respectful attitude towards other human beings, our environment and shaping of a meaningful existence (Kroflič 2007). As ethically responsible human beings we must hence direct our actions in consideration of the consequences they might have for our fellow human beings or the environment instead of

the question of concordance of our action or the motive behind it with a certain social norm or an ethical imperative.

The psychological dimension enabling the development of such a moral stance is the ability to recognize other people's emotional responses and feeling discomfort when our actions have hurt another human being. Numerous theoreticians have recently recognized the anthropological basis of compassion, indignation and empathic guilt seen by ethics as having a direct prosocial dimension, which develops even before socio-cognitive abilities prerequisite for appropriate ethical judgement (more in Kroflič 2008).

The answer to the question about the environment enabling the development of a child's prosocial and moral orientation contains two important findings relevant to our discussion. The first one is that children's primary prosocial traits begin to develop in their relationships with significant others, adults and peers, i.e. relations characterized by the presence of love and friendship, the ability for the latter developing in the presence of a nurturing environment (presence of emotionally nurturing adults, encouraging social contacts with peers) already in earliest childhood (Marjanovič Umek and Fekonja Peklaj 2008). The second finding is that kindergarten teachers have a key role in shaping inclusive environments in the education process and should accept the view of the child as capable of actively participating in that process, while in the case of teachers' assumptions that children are selfish and socially inept teachers step into a patronizing role, while children remain passive.

The comprehensive inductive education approach addresses not only discipline (i.e. interventions in cases of conflict), but other educational activities as well, such as for instance encouraging prosocial activities (e.g. mutual help), dispelling children's fear of difference, encouraging cooperation and one of the most efficient activities in this field - education through art (Kroflič 2010 b).

Based on the theoretical propositions and the array of educational activities mentioned above we can thus outline the basic structure of our inductive model for encouraging prosocial and moral development:

- Children are capable of relations of love and friendship already in their first years of life (even if ethical consciousness demands complex cognitive capacities); therefore pedagogy supporting these relationships enables the child to develop *relational response-ability* and *normative agency* for prosocial activities in a most authentic way.
- The next important focus is to *develop the sense of respect* towards concrete persons or activities because personally engaged relations may be harmful as well, in case they lead to empathic over-arousal, empathic bias, pity and paternalism.
- The last step of moral education is *to become aware of ethical principles and humanistic demands*, especially concerning human rights and ecological values, and to learn how to use them as a basis for democratic negotiation in cases of interpersonal conflicts (Kroflič 2007).

During the active implementation of the comprehensive inductive education approach in the Vodmat kindergarten it was revealed that the above-mentioned methodical steps propose a clear specification of the assignments of the kindergarten teacher.

The development of *relational response-ability* and *normative agency* requires the kindergarten teacher to provide activities encouraging different paths of communication between children, adults and peers and encouraging closer relations and attachments. Developing the *sense of respect* towards another person's feelings is, furthermore, linked to children's experimentation and testing the response of adults and peers in various ways. When noticing a negative emotional response of the person who was hurt by their actions, children frequently try to avoid facing the consequences of their behaviour. In this case the inductive role of the kindergarten teacher should, firstly, entail preventing the child's avoidance of the discomfort caused by seeing the emotional distress of the person they hurt and secondly, the teacher refraining from telling the child why a certain form of behaviour is inappropriate (different from classic discipline argumentation and Bandura's concept of model learning) and thus providing the child the opportunity to see the connection between "the cause" and "the effect" and realize what they have done wrong. Insisting on the "responsibility" for the consequences of one's action is then not a result of moral discipline warnings ("it's not ok to do this"), but rather of experiencing emotional distress, which in turn causes one's own painful realization, empathic guilt and compassion, as well as the cognitive processing of the event. In order to avoid distress, children will thus strive to right their wrong, at the same time consolidating the memory of what (dis)respectful relationships are like. It is only in the third step of the inductive education process that we resort to generalization in the form of *becoming aware of the meaning of certain values and ethical principles* and the realization that regulation of cohabitation in institutions is easiest by following pre-established rules. As can be seen from the work of J. G. Smetana, preschool children are already capable of understanding rules and following them when deciding on their actions, especially in the case of rules that aim at preventing moral conflicts (Marjanovič Umek and Fekonja Peklaj 2008). Moreover, the shaping of ethical consciousness is a life-long process and many acclaimed psychologists (Kohlberg, Gardner etc.) in fact state that the ability of autonomous ethical judgement develops in a relatively small number of adults.

In view of today's wide-spread criticism of permissiveness and the re-emergence of calls for a consistent approach to upbringing based on insisting the children accept rules and consolidate/automatize their actions in accordance to these rules, I would like to point out that such expectations are in many ways a reflection of adults' view of children as incompetent beings. The paradigm of the child as a socially competent being calls for different methods of education, including the *relational understanding of education and the developing self* (people become morally sensitive, respectful and ethical beings only through engaging in relationships and activities involving their beloved), *recognizing others as different, but worthy* by empathically listening to their story as well as *inductive discipline argumentation* resulting in children becoming aware and responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Inductive approach to education and art as an activity promoting development of prosocial behaviour in the Vodmat kindergarten

Studying various historical ideas, starting with the concept of poesis in the antique times, the criticism of the classic rationalist concepts about the development of the morale and postmodern ideas about the dialogic nature of our selves, primary responsibility to other people, our community and nature and the application of these in the Vodmat kindergarten has led us to the development of an inductive educational approach with artistic practices occupying the central role among activities encouraging prosocial and moral orientation of children. Joining on this journey strengthened us in the conviction also held by numerous internationally acclaimed theoreticians speaking in favour of humanist education (Malaguzzi, Rodari, M. Greene, M. Nussbaum and others), namely that artistic expression and empathic imagination are in fact two key factors of children's prosocial development and the resolution of inner tensions experienced by children when confronted by new situations in the environment of the kindergarten as an institution.

In my lecture *The meaning of art in the institutional preschool education as part of the inductive educational approach* (2010 b), which explored the idea of art as an inductive pedagogical practice, the following pedagogical practices forming a comprehensive inductive education approach were mentioned:

- a unique approach to discipline
- encouraging relationships based on respect towards others (methodology involving three levels of developing ethical responsibility)
- encouraging prosocial activity (mutual help)
- encouraging group cooperation
- minimizing fear of difference
- abating stereotypical judgements/prejudice
- mediation as a way of conflict resolution
- among the activities that were especially effective *education through artistic experience* should be pointed out

In order for art practices to encourage children's prosocial orientation, we asked kindergarten teachers and artists to delve into three levels of action directly linked to the development of children's identity, i.e. relations towards others, their attitude towards the environment (both natural and cultural) and historical tradition influencing our living space. Among artistic practices, we chose to employ approaches to fine art creativity and installations, music, dance and naturally, literary texts and dramatization (including puppets). Activities were generally based on the method of seven steps of experiential learning devised earlier as part of the international project *European Multiple Choice Identity* (2009-2011).

Preliminary results confirmed the majority of concepts that were part of our inductive educational approach and in a number of aspects coincide with the approach of education

through art as seen in Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi 2006, Vecchi 2010). Among those concepts, I would like to highlight the following:

- the starting point of encouraging artistic experience entails encouraging children to enter intense exploration of the part of reality that they would like to portray
- art practices do not only deepen empathic sensitivity and their wonder over beauty, but provide the possibility for children to associate the contents of artistic activity with real-life events in a way that fosters their empathic imagination and the development of cognitive concepts that they use in judging the appropriateness of a certain action
- activities had a direct positive influence on the children's ability to listen to their peers and use their ideas in the reconstruction of their own views or theories used in explaining various phenomena, which could be seen in various examples of group creativity and symbolic play that was accompanied by artistic activities
- evaluation of the impacts of inductive use of artistic activities and other pedagogical practices of comprehensive inductive education approach to the children's prosocial and moral orientations (where we have used LaFrenier and Dumas *Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation Preschool Edition (1995)* questionnaire) showed statistically important positive shifts in the more tolerant responses of the children to frustrations, more peaceful conflict solutions among peers, more prosocial behaviour in the interactions with peers, better cooperation of children with teachers and better general adaptation (the whole result). And when we have compared results of the children included in the project with control group, beside the same shifts in social competences and behaviour mentioned before we have also found less depressions, anxieties, loneliness and dependency
- in systematic observation and listening to the children in the process of active creation kindergarten teachers were able to see the child as a "rich", competent and prosocially oriented being

The recognition of the child as a "rich", competent and prosocially oriented being goes hand in hand with the realization that children are capable of experiencing true art already in the preschool period. Among the ethnographic notes that were used by kindergarten teachers to describe instances of specific inductive practices, an especially interesting one was the following:

Observing various art reproductions, Timna's (four and a half years) look is captured by Munch's print The Scream. She grabs a crayon and sketches in an intensely coloured violet scarf around the person's neck.

Preschool teacher: "What are you doing? Why are you ruining the painting I just wanted to put on the board?"

Timna: "I don't want you to put this painting on the board. You should put it into my portfolio, where we put things that are mine. This painting is mine!"

Preschool teacher: "And who is wearing the violet scarf?"

Timna: "My mommy."

Later, during spontaneous play involving magnets, Timna observes how some magnets are drawn together, while others are drawn apart (saying: "These two like each other and those two don't") and starts to describe her home situation (mommy and daddy are getting a divorce and mommy has been in the mental hospital for a month now due to mental instability).

While aesthetic purists would be quick to judge the irresponsible act of a child doodling on an art reproduction, the author of the print would probably show excitement over how a four-and-a-half-years-old girl was able to recognize the underlying feeling of his work of art and associate it with her own real-life circumstances. Even though preschoolers do not yet possess all the abilities needed for artistic expression, the story of Timna unimpeachably testifies to children's ability of a deeply-felt aesthetic experience.

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