



Theatre, Film & Visual Arts: Building Harmonies for 2020's Educative Horizon

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Abstract

"Whatever the study will be, the signs they represent have no value if they lack the ideas they want to represent". Emile. Jean Jacques Rousseau.

"Ten skills for the future workforce" **(1)** is the result of a study of the Institute for the Future (ITFF) for the Apollo Research Institute in 2011. The report looks at future work skills—proficiencies and abilities required across different jobs and work settings.

Six driving forces : Extreme longevity; Rise of smart machines and systems; Computing world; New media ecology; Superstructured organizations; Globally connected world and ten skills like: Sense-making; Social Intelligence; Novel and adaptive thinking; New Media Literacy; Virtual Collaboration; Trans-disciplinarity; etc...

The paper explores the role of Theatre, Film and Visual Arts, in education to build these new skills for the future, not as simple tools which can contribute as a pedagogic instrument for other subjects but as a basic element to be included in the educative system; the recognition of the value of theatre, film and visual arts themselves to create a different educative framework.

In the 1960s and '70's, there was a big movement in the education system, trying to introduce the possibilities of drama, film and visual arts as a tool of learning **(2)**, during recent years it has increased and some of their abilities have been used in business. Nevertheless most of the experiences have a lack of real knowledge about the epistemology of theatre, film and visual arts. Part of the problem is that they are understood in the best of cases as a simple system of signs using the code of signs without taking in account their conceptual value.

Talking about theatre for example; the Italian Eugenio Barba has been studying some years through ISTA the anthropological meaning of theatre and we have important and deep studies about the question **(3)** , in other area of theatre practice we have the theories of Augusto Boal in the "*theatre of oppressed*" **(4)** , a wide and rich epistemological body of knowledge in all the theory of theatre made by actors, directors, playwrights waiting to be known, waiting to be discovered as a real and effective mode of education. The same happens with film and other visual arts.

New challenges for the future require new ways of education. The arts will make it to understand the world and human beings in a different way. The role of arts in education cannot be only a tool for other subjects; it must take the place it had a long time ago. We must recover and rediscover the conceptual value of arts building harmonies for the future.

When Wassily Kandinsky states in "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" **(5)** that 'Every work of Art is the child of its time; it is the mother of our emotions' he could certainly be talking also about education.

This paper could be a series of recipes to be applied in order to obtain the abilities described by the Institute for the Future as 'The ten new skills for new jobs', an empiric-rationalist approach describing concrete exercises and resources used by arts practitioners to train actors, film-makers and visual artists in their area of knowledge but it is time to finish with a long list of recipes empirical-rationalistic based in dead nature worn out by use, repeated without any conceptual value for an educative system that is supporting other interests than knowledge.

Who has been able to see a black hole?. A big sidereal ogre. Art is defined as art for it's effects. The thesis in this paper is that the present system hypothetical-deductive used by the quantum physicists to explain the universe is the system that is used today to produce the art and the system to be used for education in the future. The question is why we insist on educating human beings as robots, when very soon we will have smart machines quicker and more efficient developing the same jobs.

The next generation will need to compete in the job market with androids and robots, if we continue educating in the same way.



The Institute for the Future and the University of Phoenix, Arizona have been working in research to foresee the future for more than 40 years; between all the interesting reports, articles and books they have produced, we can find an amazing study called: "Ten skills for the future workforce" is the result of a study of the Institute for the Future (ITF) for the Apollo Research Institute in 2011.

The report looks at future work skills—proficiencies and abilities required across different jobs and work settings. Six driving forces : Extreme longevity; Rise of smart machines and systems; Computing world; New media ecology; Superstructured organizations; Globally connected world.

The report answers the question : What aspects and abilities will be crucial for human beings in order to do those jobs that machines are not able to learn or develop. The report describes ten new skills that we are going to explore in detail together with a study of what is the role arts can play building harmonies for these new skills. Why it is necessary for the future of education to develop, include and generalise the study of the arts in the educative system. We will provide evidence about how arts are essential to educate in these new skills and which are the contents of their epistemological body and training that are relevant for the development of the new abilities described in the report.

Sense-making.- The report describes this ability as: *"The ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed. As smart machines take over rote, routine manufacturing and service jobs, there will be an increasing demand for the kinds of skills machines are not good at"*.

The art of Theatre and film for example and the different disciplines like acting, directing or writing have a lot to say about this skill. Practitioners work with text and subtext, actors, directors, play and screen writers are trained to understand and create the deeper meaning of a situation. Text acts as signifier and subtext is the meaning. The theatre theory offered from Aristotle to Lope de Vega, Stanislavski or Michael Chejov hundreds of writings talking about how to train actors in the ability to determine the deeper meaning of what is being expressed. For me is relevant the work of Michael Chejov in the technique he called 'Psychological Gesture' a way to train actors in the ability to create and understand atmospheres (6). The important thing is not what the text is saying but what it means in the minds of the audience. Film as an art was created when in the early beginnings of cinema people like Pudovkin or Eisenstein decided to intermix two different images in order to create a new meaning.

The arts are able to perceive the deeper meaning generated in a group of human beings, probably robots will be able to decode the words we are saying here or in a conversation, or even in the future maybe to decode a group of body signs but not to understand what is happening exactly between us. The way I'm saying the words, the way you are listening to me, the relations created and the atmosphere between us, the communication of minds and the perception of our self, the most human and spiritual level of communication it hardly can be reproduced by an android. The study of the arts make us able to develop and grow this deep sense of sensitivity, the capacity to hear and see the world from another perspective to extend our view far from the materialistic proximity. The education through arts can produce an explosion of imagination, creativity, understanding, and the development of the most human capacities. The actor Yoshi Oida says in his book "The Invisible Actor"

"For me, acting is not about showing my presence or display my technique. Rather it is about revealing, through acting, "something else"; something that the audience doesn't encounter y daily life. It is no physically visible, but, through the engagement of the onlooker's imagination, "something else" will appear in his or her mind" (7).

All this is directly connected with the next skill it is: **Social intelligence.-** *"The ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions. While we are seeing early prototypes of "social" and "emotional" robots in various research labs today, the range of social skills and pretend emotions that they can display is very limited. Feeling is just as complicated as sense-making, if not more so, and just as the machines we are building are not sense-making machines, the emotional and social robots we are building are not feeling machines".* Again the art of theatre and film offer us many examples. One of the main study of actors is precisely how to use words, tone and gestures accordingly with the character they are creating, for centuries actors have been trained to observe and reproduce this language of the body. It has been proved that the non-verbal communication is nearly 70% of our power of communication. Film and theatre makers know very well how to manage this ability. Listening and reading body exercises are developed as a way to train actors and thousands of books have been written about it.



We can give many examples of practical experiences in each of these skills for the future, examples of the arts training which are especially appropriate to develop these new skills, if we talk about **Novel & adaptive thinking**.- It is *'The proficiency at thinking and coming up with solutions and responses beyond that which is rote or rule-based. The ability to respond to unique unexpected circumstances of the moment'*. We are talking about creativity. I can give examples of this ability in the training of artists in different disciplines but probably we can easily think in this capacity of visual arts to see the reality from a different point of view what people called "Divergent thinking". There is a very common place exercise in theatre called: The magic If, created by the Stanislavsky system, which consists of a series of proposed situations for actors, writers and directors where they must think of an answer for different characters, circumstances and adapt to different environments. Musicians also learn how to produce improvisations based in a common rhythm.

Cross-cultural competency.- *'The ability to operate in different cultural settings In a true globally connected world, a worker's skill set could see them posted to any number of locations—they need to be able to operate in whatever environment they find themselves. This demands specific content, such as linguistic skills, but also adaptability to changing circumstances and an ability to sense and respond to new contexts. Organizations increasingly see diversity as a driving force of innovation. Research now tells us that what makes a group truly intelligent and innovative is the combination of different ages, skills, disciplines, and working and thinking styles that members bring to the table'*. In the arts context we know very well this ability because it is related to the professional development of arts production, often one of the greatest difficulties is to work with a wide team of people with different specialities and tasks within the production process. It affects all arts production and without doubt the contribution of film, theatre, visual arts, music and dance with the experience to organize and manage a spectacle in a concrete place or touring a company. We can also talk about the studies of the Italian Eugenio Barba and his maestro Grotowski (**8**). They have been exploring different kinds of training for actors using anthropological studies and bringing new knowledge from other cultures like Noh Theatre or Kathakali unifying ways and methods of training for actors which widely and largely have been applied in all the theatres of the world.

The next skill is the capacity to develop abstract thinking, the easiest way to introduce arts in it is to talk about the avant-garde Picasso or Dali or Kandinsky, it is described by the Institute for the Future as : **Computational thinking**.- *'The ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts and to understand data-based reasoning*. This universal thinking can be found especially in the art

of music, the virtue of arts is to establish the relationship with the real world, to bring the most conceptual part of thoughts and enable them to be understood in terms of sensitivity. It is exactly what happens with music. Music is a combination of sound and silence like a binary system. This simple code acts as the code of zeros; the combination of these two elements make it possible for music to exist as the code of binary makes it possible for a computer to work. We can't listen to a binary code but we can listen to music. The same happens with dance and in theatre it is the way classical verse has been taught for generations. Silence and words, a kind of musical system, which was of basic and great importance before Gutenberg to reach an audience illiterate or uneducated. a way to transmit values and ideas.

The development of arts in the last ten years have introduced new technology using new media to create a common language on stage. Terms like Binocular approach where phenomenology and semiotics are mixed are been used and investigated for modern theatre theory. Arts are very open to such experiences of multidisciplinary and new ways of staging like Digital Performance also experiences like the Theatre of Oppressed created by Augusto Boal show how arts can be used for other proposals of learning in this case as a social tool or the use of music or theatre to teach languages. We are also experiencing the use of new media through mobiles or ipads it curiously takes us back to other times when the way to perceive the world was the use of words and the use of voice. The character of new media increases the audio content and the audio-tactile consciousness. Arts again are playing an important role in the creation and understanding of how to use new media.

The next skills proposed by the Institute for the Future are precisely the skills called: **New-media literacy**.- *'The ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media forms, and to make use if these media for persuasive communication'*. **And Transdisciplinarity**.- *'The literacy in and ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines. Many of today's global problems are just too complex to be solved by one specialized discipline (think global warming or overpopulation)'*.



We have been describing and giving examples of how different arts are able to build these new skills and we could find hundreds of other examples for each of these skills. We could continue with a long repetition of how arts and their knowledge are fitting with the objectives pursuant to these abilities but it is not necessary. **Cognitive load management and Virtual collaboration** are the resultant skills which at this point I think are clear for most of us.

But I want to finish talking about the last skill it is:

Design mindset.- *The ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes. Discoveries from neuroscience are highlighting how profoundly our physical environments shape cognition. As Fred Gage, a neurobiologist who studies and designs environments for neurogenesis (the creation of new neurons), argues, 'change the environment, change the brain, change the behavior.'* For centuries it has been the main argument of arts, as we said recently phenomenological approach has been used to understand and analyze the staging of a theatre play. Kandinsky fully engaged in the study of these possibilities of colors and shapes to change minds and environments, to create feelings and sensations, to change the brain and the behavior. It was the utopic goal of artistic avant-gardes and the way writers from the last century tried to change hearts and minds. Beckett, Pinter, Valle-Inclan, Yeats, Steiner.

But how much of utopia is in the description of these new skills?. I will say it is a real necessity because if we are not able to introduce these new abilities in future education if we don't change the model the decadence of western societies will be a fact. To develop these new skills and the introduction of arts in the educative system means to change our values about nation, language, culture. To introduce these new skills to change the model it is not going to be easy the model of growth in western societies it is clinging to the idea, paraphrasing Adam Smith: In the exploitation of the human being. If we want to develop these new skills described by the Institute for the Future we need to produce changes in the educative system, we will need to rediscover and re-introduce the importance of arts in education if we want to produce a generation able to win the war with smart machines and develop this aspect essentially human. We can't continue blind to the brave new world that is coming and if we don't change circumstances will change us. It remains to be seen if we can create our own destiny, or if we merely remain afloat after the technological tsunami has swept over us.

Adolphe Appia stage designer at the beginning of the twenty century in his sketch entitled "the shadow of cypress" explains: *"For this space the author proposed at first place to design an avenue of cypresses. Later he has avoided the trees keeping only their shadows. Finally only remain the shadow of the sketch because it is enough to evocate a whole landscape"*.

References

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