



Creativity as a means of shaping human subjectivity according to Wiesław Karolak¹

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to present creativity as a means of shaping human subjectivity, based on the art therapy practice of Wiesław Karolak. The author's understanding of art therapy is one of therapy through creativity (or artistic expression). It is based on the belief in man's creative nature. Creativity is not exclusively reserved for artists, as it is a universal trait that characterizes every human being. However, the adoption of creative attitudes in contemporary culture is not encouraged by modern scientific and technological civilization and consumerism. A human being can choose between two ways of functioning: the automatic realization of imposed patterns of existence, or the conscious experience of life, which involves setting one's own goals. It is necessary to actualize the creative nature, including the dispositions responsible for creation, in order to become a subject, i.e., the source of one's actions. The Creativity Supporting Development program, co-authored by Karolak, is undoubtedly helpful in this process. The author implements its principles in art therapy workshops, the purpose of which is the formation of human subjectivity. Based on his own artistic education, he gives a special role to expressing the visual. He frequently uses drawing, which he equates with thinking. Through the creative activity of drawing, the participants in the workshops become aware of what was previously incomprehensible to them and gain insight into their own emotions, which ultimately leads to self-knowledge. Through the discovery of their own creativity in the realm of art, they have the desire to use it in their daily experiences. In this way, they become conscious subjects who responsibly direct their own lives according to the knowledge gained through creative exploration. Artistic expression activates a creative attitude that is characterized by "novelty". Thus, human subjectivity is an expression of productive thinking in the conceptualization of Otto Selz, which takes on a creative form within a specific social context. The method of content analysis is the basis of this text.

Keywords: artistic expression, creativity, culture, creative therapy, subjectivity, creative nature

Introduction

Herbert Read's assertion that "man is above all the one who creates" (Read, 1967, p. 7) provides the foundation upon which both aesthetic education and art therapy are constructed. According to Read, human beings create beautiful things from an early age, however, this ability is gradually lost as individuals become immersed in civilization determined by scientific and technological revolutions. Furthermore, contemporary consumerism also does not favor creative attitudes. It is crucial to highlight that this anthropological assumption is applicable to all individuals without distinction, irrespective of age, level of education, or profession. This does not imply that it is limited to gifted and educated artists alone. Every human being

has the capacity to create and to form themselves in the likeness of a piece of art, thereby shaping a singular identity. This process takes place through artistic engagement, whether it is experienced in aesthetically pleasing situations or enacted through creative endeavors. Art enables individuals to actualize their characters, thereby revealing new psychological dispositions that facilitate creative thinking and action. This subjective constitution of human beings serves as the foundation for independent functioning in the world. According to Kazimierz Obuchowski, "...the distinguishing feature of the subject is the intention to define one's identity and to integrate goals and actions in relation to a coherent whole" (Obuchowski, 2000a, p. 89).

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This understanding of subjectivity is contingent upon the knowledge possessed by the individual, both that which is already held and that which is self-actualized. It is this knowledge that serves as the foundation for the setting of goals, which in turn directs the course of one's entire existence (Obuchowski, 2000a). Consequently, human subjectivity should be equated with conscious agency (or decision-making), which enables self-determination and presupposes freedom: "...the highest form of human behavior is conscious action. This is an action whose actual motive, or program and goal, the individual is able to formulate. The formulation of a motive for it should be such that it can be subjected to the individual's own control. It should also be verified, modified, and the behavior itself can be subjected to intentional control at every stage of its enactment. Therefore, an individual who is aware of their intentions and the reasons behind them is able to direct their behavior, adapt it to the situation, and even abandon it in favor of another, more appropriate action. Individuals are the subject of their own behavior. As such, they are accountable to themselves for actions that disrupt the order of the world in which their life unfolds" (Obuchowski, 2000b, p. 34).

While human beings are subjects from the moment of birth, the attitude of adults, including parents, guardians, teachers, and educators, is of paramount importance in guiding the purposeful development of their evolution. One method of shaping such subjectivity is art therapy, which was conceptualized by Wiesław Karolak as a form of developmental therapy. He is a co-author of the educational and art therapy program, Creativity Supporting Development. The initiative was developed at University of Lodz, at the International Institute of Education through Art, which is part of the Department of Humanities and Economics. In emphasizing the program's objectives, the author notes that Creativity Supporting Development encompasses exercises and creative workshops that are intended to facilitate the practical thinking and action skills of participants. The workshops can be conceptualized both as a methodology of engagement and as a tool, serving as a consultative and exercise instrument for the resolution of fundamental existential issues. They primarily seek to

facilitate self-knowledge and enhance our capacity to recognize and actualize the extraordinary potential within us (Karloak, 2005, p. 149).

Karloak uses the term "therapy through creativity" interchangeably with art therapy, as do many other art therapists. In this context, art therapy is referred to as "creative therapy" (Karloak, 2019). The individual creative process of those partaking in a workshop serves as a means to enhance human development. Consequently, the kind of therapy he proposes has a deeply anthropological nature, with the aim of activating human subjectivity and shaping individual humanity.

The author, emphasizing the role of art as an anthropogenic factor, does so from the dual perspectives of an artist and an art therapist. As a highly experienced therapist with an artistic education, he has conducted hundreds of sessions, workshops, and projects: "I have carried out these initiatives with children, youth, students, teachers, methodologists, therapists, and people from many cultures in various places in the country and abroad" (Karloak, 2015, p. 7). The author presents his method of working in the realm of creativity and creative training, which he continually refines to meet the needs of the participants in his sessions.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the process of the formation of human subjectivity that takes place during developmental therapy, as it is conceptualized by Karolak. In order to achieve this goal, the first step will be to characterize the understanding of humanity that underlies this form of therapeutic intervention. Subsequently, drawing, which is conceptualized as a form of thinking, and the method of activation of the creativity of the individual during this form of art therapy will be examined. The content analysis method is used herein.

1. The Human Being – "Homo Creator"

Wiesław Karolak is a firm believer in human creative nature: "... man is creative in his essence, that in every person there is a hidden power – the power of creativity" (Karloak, 2019, p. 28). Therefore, creativity

is a universal characteristic of the human species. The author draws attention to the ambiguity of the concept of “creativity” in the European culture. In the field of aesthetics alone, this concept is variously defined and is of interest to different disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, education, and cultural studies. Each of these fields deals with creativity in its various aspects, including the creative subject, the creative process, the product of creative activity (a work of art), the audience for art, and the subjective and objective conditions of creativity. Karolak employs a philosophical view of creativity that is intimately tied to human subjectivity and relates to human functioning in the world. This perspective on creativity emphasizes personal development associated with acquiring certain formal competencies, including perceiving, identifying, and solving problems (Karolak, 2014). These skills are helpful in the management of challenging situations that require rapid response and action. The author points out that there is a close relationship between human subjectivity and freedom: “In such a philosophical perspective, a subjective person is a free person. Freedom here means that the person is the source of decisions, which means that he is a creative person (and, incidentally, it is worth noting that creativity has always been associated with freedom). A free person is a self-actualizing person. And a self-actualizing person is nothing other than a person who ‘takes his destiny into his own hands’” (Karolak, 2019, p. 27).

The formation of subjectivity in therapy through creativity is a process of human creation. Karolak is in agreement with Virginia Satir’s therapeutic approach, stating: “...‘Creating people’ has the same qualities as composing music or painting pictures. ‘Creative therapy’ treats a person as a medium of art – sometimes discouraging, irritating, stubborn or dull, but sometimes even humiliating, albeit inspiring.” A creative therapist views his or her student as a unified entity, encompassing both plasticity and rigidity, brilliance and dullness, variability and constancy, intellect and emotions. A creative therapist is akin to a choreographer, historian, phenomenologist, body researcher, dramatist, thinker, theologian, and visionary (Karolak, 2019, p. 27). Those in positions of authority in therapeutic settings must be aware of

the diverse needs of the individuals they serve, who present with a wide range of personality traits and characteristics, necessitating the flexibility of the therapist to adapt to their unique needs. The application of uniform or standardized treatment approaches is therefore contraindicated, given that individuals cannot be treated in a manner that is either generic or formulaic. Instead, the therapist should adopt an individual approach, encouraging clients to engage in their own creative pursuits. In Karolak’s words: “Creativity is defined here as a specific set of skills that can be acquired through the application of certain rules and actions related to creative problem solving. Based on the assumption that creative action is a skill involving the transformation of thoughts, emotions, energy, and objects, practical improvement of this trait is proposed” (Karolak, 2005, p. 150).

Karolak observes that individuals frequently lack awareness of their creative abilities. In fact, these abilities often lie dormant or unacknowledged. In a manner reminiscent of the teachings of Socrates, the author asserts that within each person lies a wealth that provides inspiration and can be uncovered: “Only in oneself did each one carry their treasure, and there they found the source of inspiration” (cited in Karolak, 2005, p. 149). The words of the renowned philosopher and founder of ethics are referenced to underscore the internal endowment of human beings. According to Karolak, the process of revealing what is valuable in a person – that is, unveiling the hidden axiological content with a creative potential – occurs through the creative act, equated with expression. This form of creativity should be honed through continuous practice. A single instance of expression is not sufficient for a lasting change to occur in a person. Rather, a consistent disposition towards expression is necessary. The author emphasizes that the advocated creativity has nothing to do with the romantic vision thereof: “We treat creative thinking and action similarly to any other type of human activity. We believe that it is possible and even necessary to program our future – to program success” (Karolak, 2005, p. 150-151).

The author proposes a duality in human behavior. He draws upon the work of Makary K. Stasiak (2015) and differentiates two models of human functioning:

the Enlightenment model and the Consciousness model. The former represents the unconscious individual, whereas the latter, as the name suggests, pertains to the conscious individual. An individual operating within the unconscious realm is passive, whereas a conscious person is an active and self-determining subject. This classification posits that a human being can either adhere to externally imposed patterns of behavior and common conduct automatically, or he or she can independently decide about their life and realize their own goals. “An organism that is unaware of its status as an autonomous subject and of its role as a player in a game with its environment usually behaves in a habitual manner. The internal structure, or subjective dispositions, are determined and defined. An organism that plays the game with its environment as an autonomous subject, that is to say, in accordance with its subjective dispositions. It activates such skills and responds to problems in accordance with the limitations imposed by its subjective dispositions. “It cannot alter its individual dispositions” (Stasiak, 2015, p. 134). An individual in a state of unconsciousness is incapable of transcending limitations experienced in daily life. In contrast, a conscious individual is a self-actualizing being in a state of continuous growth and evolution, expanding their identity and acquiring the skills necessary for autonomous functioning: “A conscious person can be deliberately creative. This deliberate creativity means that they perceive themselves as a subject playing a game with their environment and reflect on the games they play.” An individual who is conscious of the nature of the games being played can modify themselves and these very games. In particular, an individual in a state of consciousness can enhance their predispositions in such a manner that they begin to prevail over situations that previously caused them to fail or experience losses (Stasiak, 2015, p. 134).

When an individual engages in creative activities, they transform their mode of functioning – from an unconscious being to a conscious subject. This process involves the actualization of their subjectivity, enabling them to think and act independently. Karolak identifies this state of mind as “deliberate creativity”, a term borrowed from the aforementioned Stasiak. As Karolak notes: “Prof. Dr. Makary K. Stasiak de-

fines deliberate creativity as achieving development through a deliberate agent and states: ‘new possibilities for directing one’s own development arise for the deliberate agent. They gain insight into how they themselves operate. They can thus directly influence their behavior and modify it in ways that promote development’ (Karloak, 2005, p. 149).

Karolak posits that the capacity to alter one’s functionality via a creative approach is accessible to all individuals. There is no predetermination or fate that engenders inequalities among individuals. Throughout the process of attaining a conscious mode of functioning, the art therapist plays a pivotal role in achieving the objectives of creative therapy. The effectiveness of these approaches is contingent upon the active subjectivity of the individual, which is characterized by creative thinking and action. “A conscious person can act as a trainer and organize various situations in such a way that they cause subjective development in unconscious people” (Stasiak, 2015, p. 136). As Stasiak emphasizes, “The role of the trainer is to elicit a creative act, which entails enhancing the efficiency of the subject’s actions. This objective is achieved by enhancing the subjective dispositions of the client” (Stasiak, 2015, p. 137). The creative act is initiated through the implementation of innovative techniques, methods, and artistic means utilized in art therapy. In the creative development model proposed by Stasiak, the importance of organizing boundary situations, or what he refers to as deliberate situations, cannot be understated. This endeavor is aimed at encouraging individuals to depart from their customary behaviors. The responsibility of the trainer is to foster a culture of reflection and evaluation of newly acquired behaviors on a continuous basis.

2. Drawing as a form of thinking

Cognition and thinking are associated with theoretical order according to Aristotle’s aspect theory. However, creative thinking is closely connected with the realm of human production in art therapy, including the approach of Karolak. Individual artistic expression using various forms of art is necessary to activate this type of thinking. Since visual arts, including digital

forms, are important to the author, he is a proponent of their use in creative therapy. His emphasis is especially on the role of drawing. His premise is that everyone can draw – children, adolescents, and adults. “Drawing has been the most democratic art discipline, accessible to everyone. It does not require crossing a certain technical threshold. It is a ‘substitute for a work of art’” (Karolak, 2015, p. 21).

The author asserts that the concept of drawing is not a monolithic entity, as the term is perceived in a variety of ways. He characterizes it as follows: “Drawing is a branch of visual art, the essence of which is the use of line on a surface. (...) Drawing is often a preparatory study, a preliminary sketch for a composition in another technique (painting, graphics, or sculpture). However, on occasion, the sketch itself may be regarded as a complete drawing, a final work” (Karolak, 2015, p. 30). There are various ways of drawing, different tools and materials used in this art, and multiple possibilities for teaching drawing. The act of drawing is spontaneous, deriving from an internal urge to express one’s experiences, feelings, and emotions. Additionally, the act of drawing can be motivated by a request or instruction from a workshop leader, further enhancing its versatility. Given its brevity, drawing can be an effective activity within time-restricted contexts.

Although traditionally associated with the visual arts, drawing is also regarded as a form of cognitive activity. This view was reinforced by the participation of numerous artists and critics in a project titled “Now Drawing,” held in 2013 at the University of the Arts in Poznan. The event prompted debate among professors from leading Polish art academies on the essence of drawing.

As one such professor, Karolak proposed that drawing represents a mode of thinking: “Drawing represents the first stage of creation, functioning as the most basic form of recording thoughts, preliminary notations, inquiries, and reflections. In this context, the act of sketching can be regarded as the simplest and most effective language through which the intentions that arise in the mind are conveyed” (Karolak, 2015, p. 21). According to *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* [*The Universal Dictionary of the Polish Language*] drawing is defined as “a symbolic

representation of something,” and “a collection of certain symbols” (Dubisz, 2003, p. 1024). Thus, when drawing, one can utilize symbols. Karolak adds: “(...) personally, I most often describe drawing as ‘thinking on paper.’ This form of thinking is highly valuable. When thinking on paper, we engage in multiple iterations of thought (at least five times):

- first, we think (what to draw, why),
- second, we give form and shape to our thoughts (how to draw),
- third, by drawing the form, we use our hand (it can be said that we ‘think with our muscles’),
- fourth, we look at the drawn shape (thinking with our sight),
- fifth, looking turns into seeing (reflective, questioning thinking)” (Karolak, 2015, p. 27).

The act of drawing on a surface represents a process of cognitive actualization, whereby the individual attempts to comprehend concepts that were previously inaccessible to them, delving into their emotional and internal experiences. This ultimately leads to the achievement of self-knowledge. As Edwards (2006, p. 44) asserts: “the objective of drawing is not merely to illustrate the intended subject matter but also to reveal the artist’s inner self.” The process of drawing is known to stimulate creative thinking and action, and is believed to ultimately activate human subjectivity, as it requires the individual to dissociate themselves from their own self, others, and the environment. This estrangement allows the individual to discover their agency in the realm of art, and to gain a profound conviction that if they can have a real impact on their drawing, they can also independently shape their own life and external reality.

Karolak posits that the creative manifestations of participants engaged in art therapy should be evaluated beyond the parameters of conventional artistic standards. He asserts that the primary objective of such expression is not to produce artwork that conforms to commonly accepted artistic norms. The author acknowledges the prevalence of drawing as a therapeutic and diagnostic tool. He underscores the inherent interconnection between therapy and diagnosis. However, he differentiates between thera-

peutic and diagnostic drawing. Therapeutic drawing in art therapy, he posits, differs from diagnostic or projective drawing: “In projective tests, drawing is very directive, diagnostic, telling what should be drawn. In art therapy, freedom of expression should be encouraged” (Karolak, 2015, p. 31).

In opposition to the tendency of some to interpret drawings in an overly simplistic manner, which detracts from their therapeutic value, Karolak asserts that a therapist must recognize and address the complexities inherent in the content of a patient’s drawings. These may include conscious, unconscious, or even incomprehensible elements, which the patient may be unable to fully comprehend. In his 2015 work, Karolak (p. 23) further elaborates, stating: “A therapeutic drawing cannot be treated as a collection of signs and symbols that can be interpreted using strictly defined rules and specific analytical categories. An art therapist engaged in the analysis of drawings for therapeutic and cognitive purposes must be aware that a competent psychotherapeutic interpretation of a drawing is almost unattainable without specialized training. Moreover, there are no universally accepted methodologies for the assessment or analysis of such drawings. The acquisition of simplified book knowledge about the interpretation of drawings for diagnostic purposes is not a sufficient preparation for a diagnostic analysis.”

According to Karolak, the primary tenets of creative therapy can be summarized as authenticity and the intensity of the creative experience. The latter is believed to be responsible for the organization and alteration of human experience, as well as for the perception and interpretation of one’s surroundings. This perspective is corroborated by the words of Samuel T. Gladding, who states that “the choices and transformation of patients during therapy result from their own reflections on aspects of life they previously did not notice. Art, it is argued, not only acts as a catalyst for change but also provides insight into a broader context. It evokes emotions and provides the patient with new possibilities for action. By doing so, it broadens the patient’s horizons, enabling them to re-engage with the world and work towards their own achievable vision of the future” (Malchiodi, 2014, p. 320).

3. The method for activating human subjectivity

The methodology employed by Karolak in his proprietary program, Creativity Supporting Development, is derived from his anthropological assumptions. He espouses a belief in the creative capacity of humans, which informs the structure of his proposed workshops. These workshops aim to foster human subjectivity. In his therapeutic approach, he posits that the patient’s creative activity, understood as self-expression, plays a pivotal role. Accordingly, the art therapy developed by Karolak may be categorized within the broader field of “expressive therapy” (Malchiodi, 2014). The program’s sessions revolve around six primary themes: school, home, family, work, money, and health. Supplemental topics include the self, time, the world, happiness, success, and values. Therefore, these workshops possess an existential nature: “These workshops mainly serve to get to know oneself and deepen our perceptions of the extraordinary possibilities within us. In the exercises, we reflect on values, on what constitutes the fullness of life, on top of what love, kindness, and happiness are. Here, we deeply explore issues such as the home, family, school, work, and money. Here, we discover ourselves. The essence of these workshops for each person is to independently arrive at self-knowledge, understanding their capabilities and limitations” (Karolak, 2005, p. 149). In the initial stages of the workshop, participants are encouraged to individually determine the scope of meaning for the concepts that are the subject of creative reflection during the sessions. This is followed by an invitation to share their thoughts with others, thereby enabling them to experience similar reflections. As Karolak (2005, p. 149) notes, “the aim of the workshops is to create open situations for the exchange of emotions, thoughts, signs, and languages.”

The creative output of participants in art therapy is influenced by the therapist’s approach, which involves asking a range of questions related to the chosen theme. This process facilitates self-reflection and encourages creative expression. Władysław Karolak’s approach bears resemblance

to the methodology employed by Socrates (as outlined by Tatarkiewicz, 1993). Like Socrates, Karolak emphasizes the importance of seeking truth through a process of questioning and provides numerous guidelines for the proposed workshop scenarios. As Władysław Tatarkiewicz observed, Socrates' epistemological theory was essentially a methodology of knowledge acquisition: "Socrates was not a theoretician but a virtuoso of method; he did not formulate its rules but demonstrated by example how to apply them. The methodology he employed was one of discussion and intellectual collaboration. It consisted of two parts, negative and positive, 'elenctic' and 'maieutic': the first taught how to remove false beliefs, while the second how to acquire true ones" (Tatarkiewicz, 1993, p. 75). Socrates held the belief that through the appropriate posing of questions, every individual was able to achieve the knowledge that resided within them: "Socrates called his second method maieutics, or the art of midwifery; he thought that every person carries true knowledge within themselves but is unaware of it, and needs help to bring it forth; hence, the teacher's function is analogous to the art of midwifery. Socrates fulfilled this role by asking questions. His method was one of joint searching, which today is called heuristic. The role of the leader lay in skillfully asking questions;" (Tatarkiewicz, 1993, p. 76). It is important to note that the skill of asking questions is derived from an understanding of the fundamental nature of reality. Although Socrates was a highly regarded educator in Athens, he was not a repository of ready-made knowledge: "(...) he did not promise to impart the truth to his students, but rather to engage in the search for truth alongside them" (Tatarkiewicz, 1993, p. 75). Similarly, Karolak does not provide his workshop participants with preconceived solutions. He neither proffers ready-made responses to the issues under consideration nor suggests how these issues should be approached.

It is essential to acknowledge that the methodology employed by Socrates was driven by a pragmatic objective. Through the acquisition of knowledge, he sought a lasting and spiritual

benefit, not simply material gain. He understood truth to possess objective properties distinct from those of the sophists, who viewed it as relative and conventional. As a moral philosopher, he believed that only knowledge – or truth – was efficacious in achieving the moral objective. This objective, he posited, was the moral improvement of people: "One who possesses knowledge, and consequently virtue, possesses the greatest good and thus is happy" (Tatarkiewicz, 1993, p. 78).

To demonstrate the efficacy of Karolak's art therapy method, it is essential to present one of his proposed exercises, titled "The tree." This exercise comprises three phases and a confrontation of the results of creative activity. The initial phase invites participants to reflect on the concept of a tree: "What kinds of trees do we have? What associations do you have with a tree? Can you find a symbolic, poetic, or metaphorical interpretation? Think about which tree you identify with. Are you strong like an oak? Are you trembling like an aspen? Are you like an acacia, beautiful but with thorns? What kind of tree are you? Imagine this tree, which has roots, a trunk, branches, and twigs. So, part of the tree is underground, and part is above ground. In the ground, there are probably thick and thin roots. Above ground, there is the trunk and the crown. Does your tree bloom, bear fruit, or lose its leaves?" (Karolak, 2015, p. 64). In the subsequent phase of the exercise, participants are requested to visualize the tree they have identified, which may be either a deciduous or coniferous tree or any other type of a tree: "Please record all your thoughts in writing" (Karolak, 2015, p. 64). Finally, clients are encouraged to reflect on their values: "Please consider what values guide you in life. Which are the most important to you? Find a place on your tree where you would like to mark this. On a leaf? On a twig? On a branch? On the trunk? On the roots?" (Karolak, 2015, p. 64). Following the individual intellectual reflection phase and the subsequent creative visualization, the workshop participants engage in a comparison of their works, with an aim to identify and confront their conclusions: "What conclusions can you draw from your works?" (Karolak, 2015, p. 64).

Conclusions

The aim of art therapy, as conceived by Karolak, is to shape and transform the human condition by means of creativity. The author places particular emphasis on the therapeutic value of drawing, which he views as an act of thought and a means of understanding the internal and external world through the use of lines on a surface. The therapeutic value of drawing is enhanced by the method of questioning, which is similar to that of Socrates. The purpose of drawing therefore goes beyond the purely artistic dimension to encompass a wider anthropogenic role, which extends into the realms of subjectivity and the activation of the human condition. Artistic expression undertaken by workshop participants actualizes the human creative nature, including human creative dispositions and emotionality, through which deliberate creativity emerges – first in relation to the tasks considered during therapeutic sessions and subsequently in everyday life. Through the realization of their own creative potential within the context of art, individuals seek to apply this potential in their everyday lives. The development of an internal sense of agency and a desire to independently determine the direction of one's life, based on knowledge gained through creative exploration, occurs within. The participants become the source of action by realizing their own goals. They embark on a path of conscious functioning, which allows them to break away from passively following established life patterns. Instead, they adopt an active stance towards life by abandoning conformist behaviors in favor of creative effort. Creativity is a more challenging pursuit compared to unconscious imitative functioning. This is because it requires inner determination and resilience to the stress associated with living in constant tension and taking risks.

The concept of deliberate creativity should not be limited to aesthetic considerations, such as the ability to paint or sculpt. Instead, it encompasses the development of specific formal skills related to creative thinking and action that enable a subjective way of life. As Władysław Tatarkiewicz notes, since the 20th century, creativity has become a domain of all branches of culture and is no longer reserved solely

for art. Consequently, one can be a creative scientist, a creative engineer, a creative person, etc. The defining characteristic of contemporary creativity is a “novelty”: “While in the 19th century it was believed that only the artist is a creator, in the 20th century the idea emerged that not only artists can be creators; individuals active in other branches of culture can also be creators. Creativity is possible in all fields of human production (...) creativity is recognized by the novelty of its products, and novelty appears not only in works of art but also in those of science and technology” (Tatarkiewicz, 1988, p. 299).

It bears emphasizing that Karolak does not impose upon the participants of the workshops any specific content, as Socrates did not provide his interlocutors with any ready-made solutions. He is convinced that the result of subjectivity activated in a productive manner is productive thinking, which can manifest in a variety of creative ways, and is significantly distinct from reproductive thinking. The division of modes of thinking originates with Otto Selz and pertains to realistic thinking aimed at problem-solving: “According to Selz, the result of productive thinking is the creation of new intellectual content, while reproductive thinking consists of various forms of reproducing past experiences” (Nęcka et al., 2020, p. 404). The category of novelty plays a significant role in productive thinking: “In relation to productive thinking, novelty can concern either the product resulting from the thinking (e.g., the developed solution to the problem) or the cognitive process that led to this product. The content and outcome of productive thinking are new from the perspective of the thinker's existing knowledge but not necessarily from the perspective of others, especially all of humanity” (Nęcka et al., 2020, p. 404). As Edward Nęcka asserts, the social context determines whether productive thinking also involves creative thinking, contingent on the presence of valuable novelty (Nęcka et al., 2020).

A pertinent question that arises in light of the shift from a passive to an active approach to functioning is whether the essence of humanity can be defined in a meaningful manner. The pursuit of discovering the purpose of life – which provides meaning to human existence – is an intrinsic aspect

of human nature, as evidenced by the emergence of myth and subsequently philosophy in European culture. Although these two explanatory frameworks for the world are fundamentally divergent, as they both imbue human existence with meaning. From a psychological perspective, K. Obuchowski also corroborates the assertion that humans seek to comprehend the significance of their own existence (Obuchowski, 2000b). In his view, “the meaning of life, which determines the development of personality, makes an individual’s life stable, gives it significance, and is a central factor of personality. Even ‘imperfect’ forms of life meaning, such as the given meaning of life, play a limited but important role” (Obuchowski, 2000b, p. 264). Therefore, the discovery of the meaning of life is a prerequisite for the development and optimal functioning of an individual. Wiesława Pielasińska (1983) posits that this profound need for meaning can be fulfilled through creative expression, which is characterized by significance and value. She underscores the axiological dimension of this human activity. Pielasińska posits that attention should be focused on the subjective aspect of value, specifically the process of valuation, through which an individual assesses the goodness or badness of an object or situation and thereby becomes motivated to take further action. She observes that Herbert Read had previously queried the relationship between expression and values, positing that the answer is contingent on one’s interpretation of the concept of expression. This can be equated with play and the notion of “living in the moment,” or alternatively, with the practice of therapy. In the first case, expression is associated with joy and pleasure. In the second case, the association between expression and value depends on the theoretical perspective adopted. In the context of psychoanalysis, expression serves a compensatory

function, relieving internal tensions and conflicts. In contrast, humanistic psychology emphasizes the adaptive and self-realizing aspects of expression: “Accepting human development conditioned by internal forces, this approach emphasizes personal values of expression as the basis for affirming one’s existence, individuality, and uniqueness” (Pielasińska, 1983, p. 31). Pielasińska also notes that humanistic psychology posits that expression originates within the individual. However, this perspective ignores the fact that external reality also provides a significant source of motivation for self-expression. The act of becoming acquainted with the surrounding world allows an individual to internalize content that can subsequently serve as a source of inspiration for one’s creative endeavors, subject to the individual’s personal standards and criteria. Consequently, the value of human expression from the standpoint of cognitive science becomes evident: “The more a person takes in through their cognitive structures, the more they can give of themselves. Expression and perception are not two separate abilities, but mutually complementary processes. Read also closely links three types of activity: the internal need to communicate one’s experiences and feelings, observation, which is the pursuit of recording, preserving one’s knowledge and supporting it with practical activity, and finally evaluation, that is, the human reaction to values in the world of facts” (Pielasińska, 1983, p. 31).

The act of engaging in creative activity allows a person to become a conscious subject within a scientific-technological civilization, thereby opposing the pervasive influence of consumerism. Such individuals become active subjects in the creative process, transcending their own passivity and continuously engaging in the experience of what is valuable. This occurs through both thinking and acting in a creative capacity.

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