wydawnictwo mik

Teenagers and Art

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Art in development

We believe that – as long as we are willing to see ourselves as guides and companions on the difficult road to adulthood – the work we do together can give young people the power to change the world.

“Enough of those art games! They are supposed to learn!” Sound familiar?

Many educators and cultural organizers have probably experienced an unpleasant encounter with parents’ expectations regarding creative and artistic classes offered to young people. While in preschool and early school education various creative elements are (at least occasionally) present, in the subsequent stages of school education they are relegated to the margins. Only single hours allocated to art and music are left in the curriculum. Art and creative activities are treated as entertainment or a fad, although at the same time they are no entertainment at all for numerous pupils. On the contrary – they are sometimes a source of boredom and just another subject to pass so as not to spoil the grade point average.

The disregard for art education is hardly surprising if we consider the idea of development predominant in societies today: knowledge in the fields of natural sciences and mathematics is commonly considered more important for human survival and welfare than any other field of knowledge or experience. In nearly every sphere of life, rational cognition proves its usefulness as a tool enabling the adaptation and use of natural resources for people’s needs. Its power is based on precisely defining and categorizing physical phenomena and on the assumption that reality can be understood and mastered using scientific methods. Consequently, reflecting social beliefs and values, the educational system places emphasis on the teaching of these disciplines of knowledge, ignoring art and cultural education.

However, what has been decisive in the success of the rational worldview is at the same time the source of its limitations. When we try to apply precise scientific instruments to basic human experiences, they turn out to be unfit to explain and cope with the problems of everyday life. We learn that the intellect can overcome all obstacles and face up to any challenge that

is formulated, but – as was rightly observed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Ulrich Schiefele, scholars investigating educational processes – "[i]f one wants to find a suitable way of living or to understand how another person feels, mathematical equations, physical laws, or sophisticated computer programs won't provide much help"[1].

As early as the 1940s, British philosopher, poet, art historian, and education theorist Herbert Read depicted the modern man as torn apart and debilitated "like a bird that has had one of its wings clipped." He is unable to find the spiritual contents of his existence in the world that "commands him to use the wing of intellect, while the wing of feelings and imagination remains crippled"[2]. Proposed in response to this state of affairs, Read's educational theory recommended developing all mental, cognitive, and social dispositions: sensitivity, intellect, imagination, creative powers; aesthetic, moral, and social emotions; the ability to communicate with other people. The harmony of development was to be ensured by art, restored to society as a tool for integral development.

Little seems to have changed in education since that time. The question we should be ask ourselves also today is this: What do we actually expect from education? In what way do we want to introduce today's generation of children and teenagers to life?

If one looks into any of the numerous sources on what has been called future skills, one will read that the children and adolescents currently

1 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ulrich Schiefele, "Arts education, human development, and the quality of experience," in: Bennett Reimer, Ralph A. Smith, *Arts in education: Ninety-first yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Chicago 1992, p. 172.

2 Translated from: Irena Wojnar, *Teoria wychowania estetycznego*, Warsaw 1980, p. 185.

receiving education are going to work in occupations that do not yet exist. The most important skills allowing a person to find their place both in the labour market and in social life are commonly believed to be as follows: learning ability, adaptability to new conditions, coping with change, and cooperation in diverse teams. The so-called hard skills are increasingly often perceived by employers as relatively easy to "catch up on" as long as the candidate brings a set of desirable soft skills.

The validity of the very distinction between hard and soft skills was challenged by Przemek Staroń in his excellent book series, *A School of Heroes* (*Szkoła bohaterów i bohaterek*), in which he advises teenagers on how to cope with life and overcome difficulties. He rightly observes that what we have at our disposal in the domain of personal and social skills constitutes a strong basis for the remaining areas of our working and social life. Our personal skills are "like a rock on top of which our life is built, with all experiences gained in it, including successes." Commenting on the practical application of these abilities – for example, in the job market – he convincingly argues that "a businessman is human, all his customers are human, all his contractors are human, all his subordinates are human, and all his superiors are human, so *human skills* are fundamental to any success at all"[3].

When examining the programs and methods used in school education, we can hardly see where it is that school provides a space for acquiring, improving, and practising social skills – so as to send future creative and competent citizens, parents, neighbours, politicians, employees, entrepreneurs, and so forth into the world. Although we strongly wish for school to

3 Translated from: Przemek Staroń, *Szkoła bohaterek i bohaterów, czyli jak radzić sobie z życiem*, Warsaw 2020, p. 119.

transform into a place that prepares its students well to cope with life and creatively function in the contemporary world, we have little influence on whether or not the desirable changes in the education system actually take place. We do, however, work on what we can and want to have influence on – the cultural education provided by cultural institutions, educational organizations, and enthusiasts managing cultural activities.

Cultural education extends far beyond the formal education system. We understand it as a process that prepares individuals to navigate the complex world of interpersonal relations. Studying and experiencing these relations allows them to broaden their knowledge and develop the skills needed for interpreting various products of human activity, understanding cultural contexts, building relations with other people, and creatively transforming reality. The objective of education perceived in this way is to provide tools for independently interpreting senses and meanings, critically analysing and processing the stimuli and information from the environment, understanding and planning one's activities, and taking initiative in networks of interpersonal relations[4].

The meaning and objectives of cultural education were aptly captured by Ken Robinson, who observed that "[a]s they grow up, children learn as we all do that they live not in one world but two (…). [T]here is the world that exists whether or not you exist: the world of other people, of material objects and events. There is also a world that exists only because you exist: the world of your private consciousness. One of the challenges of being alive is making sense of both of these worlds and of the relationships between

4 Cf. Magdalena Kosno, Mikołaj Spodaryk, collaboration: Przemysław Bąbel, Elżbieta Kaproń, *Children and art*, Kraków 2021, p. 31.

them"[5]. This metaphorical explanation highlights that adolescence is a time marked by a gradual discovery of the complex nature of our functioning in the world, based on what is individual and on what is communal (shared with other people). We also see the discovery of these worlds and the interrelations between them as a school of life, a time of intense search for models of behaviour, discovering one's identity, defining the values that one's future life choices will be based on, and facing the diversity of attitudes towards the cultural and social phenomena of the contemporary world.

Concepts such as "the school of life" or "the art of living" are probably close to the heart of every one of us – educators, cultural organizers, parents, teachers, and instructors. In these circles, we perfectly understand that the period of school education is not only a time of acquiring knowledge but also – perhaps above all – the time of growing up. All of us will probably also agree that providing young people with a space and opportunity to gradually enter adulthood is our primary goal and task.

In doing so, we are not operating from positions of weakness, as cultural infrastructure is in fairly good shape. After all, apart from art or impresario institutions in the strict sense – focused mainly on the production and popularization of cultural assets: exhibitions; concerts; books; performances – what we have at our disposal is community centres, after-school clubs, youth centres, museums, libraries, and many organizations and individuals who consider it their mission to open the world of culture to the needs and perspectives of various social groups. They see people not merely as an audience but as full participants in and co-creators of cultural events and their real (actually experienced) meanings and senses. This way of

5 Ken Robinson, Lou Aronica, *Creative schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education,* New York, 2016, p. 85.

understanding the tasks facing educators, cultural organizers, instructors, and teachers working with young people allows us to see one another as a community – formed despite the division of culture and education as separate sectors and generating what turns out to be substantial resources and foundations for cultural education. A sense of common goals and the understanding of interrelations is a good point of departure for building bridges between the world of education and the world of culture.

In 2018, the Małopolska Institute of Culture hosted a series of workshops titled School and Art, during which a group of teachers together with representatives of five modern art galleries and museums located in the Lesser Poland region (Małopolska)[6] looked for ideas on how to efficiently combine the potentials and skills of education and culture personnel. To develop implementable models of cooperation for art education, we examined the backgrounds, resources, and needs of both these communities. They were presented in the form of metaphorical works of visual art. When asked to present the "ecosystem" of their work, the teachers' group used the image of a meadow: a world of cyclically repeated activities, cultivating the "plot of knowledge," gradually growing, and taking care of both vivid "butterfly" personalities taking off to independence and "bees" working in a monotonous rhythm. Pests and vermin at their subversive work, destroying the effects of harmonious cooperation, were not forgotten either. The "gallery slaves" – as the group of museum educators jokingly called themselves – saw their work as having the features of the oceanic

6 Participants in the School and Art series of workshops represented the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków (MOCAK), the Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Art Exhibitions Office in Tarnów, BWA SOKÓŁ Gallery of Contemporary Art, and the Cricoteka Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków. The workshops were designed and conducted by Maja Dobkowska.

ecosystem: with the depths and shallows of interpretation, relaxing contemplation and affirmation of creativity, sunken ships full of treasures to be discovered, dangerous maelstroms where the rights to present works of art are negotiated, and – a picture that could hardly have been left out! – a member of the modern art audience drowning in the deep, crying tears of blood as anxious educators throw them life-belts.

One of the main conclusions and recommendations formulated by the two groups was the need for the kind of educational offer that would make it possible to go beyond the vicious circle of individual or incidental encounters with art that usually result from the forced adjustment of museum classes to school curricula. The current offer reflects an effort to make the contents of museum lessons part of the core curriculum for successive levels of education, but it does not include freely delving into various dimensions of creative activities and does not provide opportunities to become practically acquainted with the diverse aspects of the philosophy of creativity, the multiplicity of artistic visions of the world, and the paradoxes and contradictions present in the language of contemporary art. Visits to museums or art galleries are usually treated as a thematic supplement to the issues discussed during Polish and history classes. During such classes, young people are supposed to consolidate and expand their knowledge about the aesthetic currents and historical epochs discussed at school (a little as if the school textbook acquired a new subsection with extended illustrative content). Teenagers are seldom offered any classes that give them an opportunity to discover new perspectives and ask questions that would overcome the conventional way of thinking about cultural and social phenomena.

The main problem in art education understood in this manner is its failure to link the issues discussed with the cognitive and developmental processes

of adolescence. Young people are introduced to the existing canons and ways of perceiving and interpreting the world, but they have no opportunities to confront the contents they learn with their own experiences and perceptions. The acquired knowledge about the world is not combined with self-knowledge and does not contribute to the independent exploration of relations between the self and the phenomena of the external world. Thus implemented, education does not support interpersonal relationships, the diversity of lifestyles, and the development of behaviours based on the system of values, which – particularly in this stage of life – are only in the process of formation and need testing in order to become a firm foundation for future life choices[7].

A response to this state of affairs could be a focus on designing the processes of exploring art and creativity together. This was where both teachers and gallery workers saw opportunities for their knowledge and skills to creatively complement those of the other group. The proposed formula of classes includes the creation of "educational triptychs" – thematic classes comprising (at least) three stages: (1) introduction to the issue based on materials prepared in cooperation by the teacher and the museum educator, (2) practical classes held in a museum or an art gallery (in this part, selected exhibits are seen in the flesh; it is also possible to use museum educators' specialist knowledge), and (3) the stage of creative consolidation, which may consist in participants creating their own works or interpreting the issues learnt. Such processes should not only focus on assimilating selected areas of knowledge about art and culture

7 Cf. Louise Hayes, Joseph Ciarrochi, *Trudny czas dojrzewania. Jak pomóc nastolatkom radzić sobie z emocjami, osiągać cele i budować więzi, stosując terapię akceptacji i zaangażowania oraz psychologię pozytywną*, trans. Sylwia Pikiel, Sopot 2019, pp. 22–23, 134.

but also (and above all) take account of the needs, capabilities, and interests characteristic of adolescence.

This was precisely the intention that inspired the writing of our book – we wish to invite the readers to get acquainted with young people's developmental characteristics and, on their basis, we wish to propose educational interventions and ideas for classes using various creative practices to explore different dimensions of life: from purely physical phenomena, through interpersonal and cross-cultural relations, to the self.

We hope that everyone who is as anxious as we are to create conditions conducive to the complete development of young people's personality will find here the knowledge and inspiration they need to design their own creative educational activities. We believe that cooperation between the communities of professionals, working together across the boundaries of sectors, and making young people's needs and experiences the centre of attention will not only translate into better arts education offers adjusted to teenagers' developmental needs but also bring many new creative discoveries to the adults involved in it: teachers and gallery workers. We believe that – as long as we are willing to see ourselves as guides and companions on the difficult road to adulthood – the work we do together can give young people the power to change the world.

The challenge is worth taking – we are advocates for a common cause.

Beyond the stereotype

Phot. Klaudyna Schubert, MIK 2023 ©

An interview with Dr Magdalena Kosno on how to support teenagers

When we talk to teenagers and listen to opinions they have, how they see a particular work of art, and what associations come to their minds, we can understand their ways of thinking and perceiving.

Magdalena Petryna: I would like to start with a question that is rather risky, or perhaps a little provocative – what are teenagers like? Is there a common denominator for people of that age?

MAGDALENA KOSNO: You can hardly put all teenagers "in one box" for many reasons. We think about a twelve-year-old and a seventeen-year-old in different ways. The social context that young people live in is also of great significance. What seems to be a characteristic shared by all teenagers, and a linking element among them is seeking acceptance from peers. The main developmental need in this period is a desire to belong to and, to some extent, also to be defined by a group. The other thing I usually associate with the teenage period is exploration, mainly in the sphere concerning the self – seeking oneself; looking for the truth; finding answers to important questions; trying different things. The changeability connected with answering the question of who you are, what you want to be like, and whom you want to be with…

Teenagers are often said to be "difficult" and hard to work with. Let us reverse the perspective and think: what do teenagers find difficult about the behaviour of adults? What can potentially be difficult between teenagers and adults from teenagers' point of view?

The answer that comes to my mind is: everything…

Is it as bad as that?

No, no [laughs]. This makes me think of the lyrics of Kazik Staszewski's song: "what pisses me off the most about young people now is that I'm no longer one of them." I am sorry about the language; this is a quotation. It seems to me that our approach to teenagers from the position of adults is an important element in this relationship. Teenagers rebel, of course;

they challenge and object to adults' decisions. But the stereotypes we approach them with are something we carry in ourselves as adults. Honestly speaking, I used to think a little along these lines too. I liked working with pre-adolescent children – school-aged ones or even preschoolers. At some point, adolescents began to come to my office too. I was afraid of this. I was afraid that adolescents would mean a higher calibre of problems, because when a teenager comes to see a psychologist, they usually have depression, eating disorders, or severe behavioural disorders. It turned out, however, that young people were not so difficult and had very diverse needs. I overcame my stereotypical thinking and discovered that young people were an excellent group to work with, also when it came to psychotherapeutic work. This is an important perspective.

And what could teenagers fault adults for?

I think there are a few things… The first one is lack of trust. Because of the stereotypes, we assume that teenagers will be difficult – that they will pull a stunt or misbehave, or that threats will appear in the group, such as drugs. All this works as a self-fulfilling prophecy. But even the lack of trust alone is difficult for young people. Let us stress that placing trust in someone does not consist in setting no limits. Trust and building a secure relationship are about setting clear limits for teenagers, but at the same time allowing them space to make autonomous decisions on a certain range of issues. After all, we want autonomous adults around us, but we deprive young people of opportunities to practice that. This is the first difficult element for teenagers – they want to have more freedom and more autonomy, they want to make certain decisions on their own, but adults do not trust them.

The second thing, in my opinion, is lack of support. The lack of support from adults, understood as simply being with the teenagers, accompanying

them along the way, talking to them about what they feel and think, and discussing how they interpret or evaluate a given situation. Sometimes young people feel that they have no adult they can rely on. I have many patients who come (or are sent by their parents) to see a psychologist about their own problems first, and then they are referred to family therapy, because it turns out that it is in the family that something has gone wrong, communication is impeded, and understanding and mutual support are lacking. Teenagers can feel it, and when something important is happening in their life, they decide not to tell their parents about it…

Although teachers no longer have the kind of authority they used to have, they can be a support group for adolescents too. There are many excellent teachers who make great mentors, and they are often the first individuals that a young person turns to about their problems. But it is not easy to build this kind of bond and a secure relationship with the teacher, particularly in our education system.

The next thing that comes to my mind is in line with the way people think about teenagers: they are a transitional group. They are no longer children, but certainly not adults yet. And adults sometimes find it hard to find a good and balanced approach to them – a golden mean. They either treat teenagers too much like children or demand more than adolescents can possibly meet. “You should be wise, you should grasp these things,” and so on. This can be difficult for teenagers. In addition, adolescents themselves do not yet know how they want to be treated. Sometimes they want to be children and feel looked after. They fear autonomy, so they cling to the support they receive from adults. On other occasions they consider themselves very grown-up, but they encounter problems because they do not yet have sufficient cognitive, socioemotional, and moral skills to make decisions and take responsibility for them.

Let us note that, even though all adults used to be teenagers once, there is a lack of general knowledge about the processes that take place in that period. What takes place in the brain during adolescence is simply unfathomable to many people. This seems to be specialist knowledge. Not everyone realizes that some behaviours teenagers engage in stem from certain developmental and frequently also biological characteristics. A fair number of conflicts arise from the fact that we do not always correctly interpret a teenager's behaviour, as might be the case when we attribute intentional action or hostility to them.

Listening to you makes me think of cultural organizers' perspective – to what extent is it possible to respond to these needs through classes devoted to art, giving young people trust and support?

I think such classes are an excellent opportunity to do that, especially if they are cyclic and if the group meets regularly to discuss things or work on various pieces of art. First of all, when we talk to them and listen to what opinions teenagers have, how they see a particular work of art, and what associations come to their minds, we can understand their ways of thinking and perceiving. Personal stories or tales may also appear, which the adult conducting the class will accept, hear out, and somehow respond to or show a work of art that could be an answer to a particular story. This is a very good space where teenagers can experience both trust – because what they say is considered important – and support. From different sources at that, since you can get support from the adult or derive it from art itself: you can notice something in a painting, sculpture, or performance and, based on that, experience or reflect on something.

Or find in art what you are experiencing yourself.

Exactly. You can also get support and acceptance from the group. It is enough if says, “I thought so too”; this is already great support. Besides, workshops or classes aimed at self-expression through various kinds of artistic activities are a time when teenagers can get tools to express themselves and process what is happening to them. Expressing oneself through art is a very good way, for instance, to regulate emotions, relieve tension, and reflect on what is happening to you. Afterwards, you can look at your work from the side or talk to somebody about it. You can show your text to a friend or to the Polish teacher, or to the lady conducting the workshop, and ask for a comment. Through such activities, teenagers are given tools for self-expression. I think this is of great value.

And what about raising difficult subjects? In art, there are works touching on delicate issues, such as the experience of one’s own body or difficulties finding one’s place in the world… On the one hand, this can be a starting point for conversation, a way to make sure that the subject comes up in the first place and that the emotions associated with it are released. On the other hand, there are reasons to fear that certain subjects will evoke difficult emotions.

I would certainly not avoid difficult topics, because teenagers want to discuss them. They want to enter the adult world, and it is good if someone helps them do this. It seems that this can bring more benefits than problems. To me, for instance, a difficult subject when I started to work with young people was sexuality – because it is taboo in our society, and I had to prepare to talk about it with teenagers. But for them it was one of the most important issues. I cannot work with a teenager without asking them about sexuality because it is an important area of development and the developing identity. This is difficult for everyone, including adults. If we fail to talk about this to teenagers, they will find a completely different and inappropriate

source of information. I believe there is no reason to be afraid of difficult subjects, but it is worth thinking over in advance what we want to say.

For example, it is worth talking about depression: young people should know about it. Perhaps in someone's case the workshops will trigger associations with their own situation – for example, darkness, a facial expression, or a posture in a painting may provoke reflection. If we create a secure space to talk, somebody may even treat this kind of meeting as purely informative, collect certain information, and do something about it later. But it happens that personal difficult situations come up during classes, and it is worth addressing them: you can express support, say "I understand that this may have been difficult for you," name the emotions involved, and name what is happening to the teenager. If necessary, you may suggest where to look for help or encourage the teenager to tell their parents about the difficulties – they can contact a specialist to solve a given problem. You can also give a helpline number to the teenager. This is a very good place where teenagers can phone and simply talk or ask about something.

So, again, we give them support. We do not dismiss their experiences. We do not dismiss their opinions. On the contrary, we give them what they are looking for – namely, the normalization of what is happening to them. Because the fact that they are confused, that they may feel depressed, that they feel uncertain about their sexual orientation and are deeply affected by this, that they are in conflict with their parents, or that they have a broken heart… As you said, all this has been present in art for millennia. Through art, we can show them that this is normal in life. But at the same time, if they are experiencing something difficult, it is worth doing something about that, because art offers an opportunity to experience emotions. In the case of younger children, it is play that provides a secure space in

which they act out various difficult situations and have a chance to work through them. It seems to me that what plays this role for teenagers is either conversation or, precisely, self-expression through art – exposure to art or creating it themselves. It happens, after all, that teenagers approach you with a question and say, “A friend of mine has a problem,” not admitting that they are talking about themselves. Art or literature can work in a similar way. They can work though a given subject in a secure way, because at first it does not concern them directly, and later it may give them the courage to say: “This is me; this is happening in my life.”

So far, we have been talking about a situation when teenagers already express their thoughts and speak about difficult experiences and when workshops give them a space for this. But are there any indirect signals we should pay attention to because they may be a sign for us that something alarming is going on?

Yes, there are. Difficult experiences are usually expressed in one of two ways, depending on temperament. Some have a tendency to internalize difficulties or hard experiences. Such individuals are more withdrawn. For example, there is someone who contributes to classes and everything is fine, but then they suddenly become silent, withdraw, avoid eye contact, and leave. This may be a signal for us that something has happened and that the person is having a difficult time. Naturally, in such situations it is not advisable to bring up this subject in an open forum, but you can approach the person; ask if everything is all right; ask if the person has a problem with anything; if he or she would like to leave for a moment, drink some water, or talk for a while… This is an example of an indirect signal.

On the opposite pole, there are externalizing behaviours. Some people respond to anxiety or tension by looking for various ways of relieving them,

but these ways may seem strange and inadequate. For example, someone suddenly starts acting silly, "monkeying about," and twisting things around… What they communicate by that is: "All right, let's not talk about it anymore; let's focus on something else." Some behaviours are openly defiant: I will not; I don't want to; all this makes no sense. This shows that something difficult is going on.

The individuals who attract greater attention are always those who react in a more externalized manner. I am convinced that we usually misinterpret such behaviour. We think the person is being "rude," disruptive, or clownish. But I believe there is always some kind of fear or anxiety behind it. If we look at it this way, it very often turns out that under the mask of a "rude" teenager there is a fragile person anxious about something. It is important to show concern to such people, for example by saying: "I can see you need to relieve some tension that has appeared in you; is everything okay? Do you need a break to unwind a little? Is anything wrong?" In the case of strongly oppositional individuals, we can simply allow them to behave the way they do. We do not force them to take part in any activities. It is worth giving them clear information that it is all right if anyone does not feel like taking part in some tasks. They can observe what we do from off to the side, or they can join in at any time.

Art is, by nature, emotionally engaging, so there is nothing wrong about someone refusing to participate in a given activity. Later we can approach them and ask if a good moment has already come for them to join in or if any difficult emotions have appeared. But let us not expect that, all of a sudden, a teenager will say: "Well, yes, as I was looking at this painting, I remembered a quarrel I had with my mother." What matters is that they get a moment to reflect and try to understand what is happening to them and why they reacted the way they did to a work of art or a situation.

Let us also remember that, for a person to open up, it takes a relationship and a sense of security. We simply give space and show concern for that person in such a way as to make them feel good and to let them know that they can experience various emotions and express them in different ways.

Consenting to teenagers' refusal to participate in some activities is one of the dimensions of the empowerment to make decisions that you mentioned.

Yes, teenagers have autonomy here. They can decide to participate, or they can be observers only. Let us also remember that some activities, for example motor ones – those involving the body, pantomime, or dancing – may be difficult for young people, particularly in early adolescence. Teenagers may want to withdraw only because they feel bad about their body at a given moment. Besides, each person goes through adolescence at a different age. There may be a fifteen-year-old girl at the onset of puberty in the group, or a fifteen-year-old boy experiencing the pubertal spurt only now, while everyone else in the group has already passed this stage a long time ago. And it can be that one person who will tell us that they do not want to participate and that the classes make no sense. And it is always worth giving that person a chance to decide what happens to them, for example what role they take on when participating in classes.

What we are talking about now is difficulties natural for the teenage period in human life. And how are teenagers affected by the context in which they function? Is this noticeable? What I have in mind is, above all, the years of the pandemic, which we were also very strongly affected by as adults, and the crises we have experienced – the energy, financial, and climate crises... A survey was

widely discussed recently according to which one in five teenagers experienced states of anxiety or depression.

Yes, this stems both from the characteristics of this period – from teenagers being more reflective and at the same time more emotionally mercurial – and from the context. The significant contributing factors behind this include the pandemic and the current situation – the war, the energy crisis, inflation, and the emergence of financial difficulties that their families may be experiencing… In brief, the uncertainty that has lasted for several years now. Are we going to school, or will classes be remote? Am I going to get a new laptop, or will my parents be unable to afford it due to financial troubles? Is my Ukrainian friend's family all right? Because now there are children from Ukraine in our schools, too.

The outcome is the accumulation of difficulties, visible even in the number of children registered for therapy. Although Kraków is a very big city, in many places people have to wait a few months for an appointment to see a child psychiatrist, for instance. Not to mention smaller towns, where access to specialists is generally limited.

Generally speaking, the situation negatively affects young people's mental health, and undoubtedly the pandemic additionally hindered the fulfilment of their important developmental need – the need for belonging to and acceptance from a group. Some children and adolescents were deprived of this opportunity. I am referring, first of all, to the secondary school students who were starting their new school precisely at the time of the pandemic. For two years they saw one another in the windows on the screen; frequently all they saw was black windows, as the webcam was not working, and so on… And then, suddenly, they found themselves in the new school with completely new people they had had no chance to

get to know yet. Finding their place in the new situation and building relationships, which are developmentally important at this age, is difficult for teenagers. This resulted in various difficulties, not always immediately – sometimes the response is delayed, because the human organism has a tendency to activate in moments of danger. But at some point, a large proportion of young people will be so stressed out that they will not cope with this on their own, and the basic support they have now will no longer be enough. I think this is a heavily straining experience for them, and one that continues, because we are still living in this uncertainty.

This is difficult even for adults, although we already have certain tools to cope...

Much is being said these days about some people having not only internal but also external factors that protect them against difficulties of disorders – for instance, having a friend can be this kind of factor. However, the effect of such factors is highly individualized. This means there will be teenagers who manage well, a little on the what-doesn't-kill-you-makes-you-stronger basis – they will go through a given experience and function well. Others, despite also having friends and parental support, will experience developmental difficulties or disorders. But most of them, unfortunately, will be in the risk group because they are more predisposed (also genetically) to depression, have no friends, have no peer support group, and are in conflict with their parents. There may also be certain characteristics increasing the risk of difficulties appearing, such as impulsiveness.

I understand that the activities we apply here are those you spoke about earlier – we are truly there for the teenagers, and the moment we see that the situation is difficult we send them to a specialist for help. Is that correct?

Yes, we certainly must not dismiss it, because it may seem that we have all experienced the pandemic and that everyone is in this situation. And there are comments such as: “I can manage, and you can’t?” But the thing is that some people have sufficient internal and external resources to cope with difficulties, while others have fewer resources or have other factors that increase the risk of going through the crisis period the hard way. We must not ignore this, but instead we should take care of teenagers, talk to them, work through subjects that are difficult for them, and try to understand their perspectives and emotions.

It is also important to provide knowledge – another element that can make young people stronger. Teenagers often lack reliable knowledge, for example about what inflation is. As a matter of fact, even adults have inadequate knowledge in economics. Why is all this happening and who is responsible? In addition – also due to the ongoing development of cognitive processes and critical thinking – young people are unable to accurately evaluate all information that reaches them, including information from the web and fake news. What makes sense and what does not? This is one of the causes behind the fact that young people become more radical in difficult moments. Some teenagers who seek information and answers to various questions adopt extreme views and attitudes because they are clear and unambiguous. Black is black and white is white. When you know how something works, you feel secure. For example, the message that vaccines are evil and that this is a pharmaceutical conspiracy is clearer than the other side’s message about vaccines differing in terms of effectiveness, research… This area may be too difficult and tangled for teenagers, and it may induce anxiety – unlike the other side, claiming that they know how things are with one hundred percent certainty. If we fail to explain, if we fail to provide them with meaningful information, it will also be harder for them to cope with and work through such situations. Knowledge reduces fear – not in every case, but very often.

In these crisis situations adults also feel anxiety and uncertainty. Does it make sense to share these feelings with teenagers, or is it going to weaken their sense of security?

The truth always makes more sense than untruth. I understand the attitude focused on protection…

…and the desire to be a rock…

"Let's not worry; everything is fine." In the case of younger children – yes, because they do not yet have the ability to analyse situations or process a large amount of information, so when we say that everything is fine and that we know what to do, this gives them a sense of security. With adolescents it is different; you can hardly tell them that things are great when your legs are trembling and your voice is breaking… They get a contradictory message if you do. And when a person does not know what is going on, they come up with the darkest scenarios. It is much safer to tell teenagers that you are afraid too, and that you also feel the uncertainty they feel, because then you are afraid together, but neither of you is going to sit down and cry, are you? Of course, you can sit down and cry sometimes, no problem, but what I mean is that young people can see you afraid and still moving on, trying to overcome this fear. They can see you try to do something about it, for example talk about it. Or you can say you cannot cope anymore and must see a psychologist because you are too overwhelmed by the situation. We show various ways of solving problems and coping with difficult emotions, which means we not only provide teenagers with more support and confidence but also mould their coping styles. Besides, if you pretend that all is quite well and at the same time send signals that the situation is shaping up badly, young people can take it as a sign that you do not trust them, that you are not telling them the truth, and that you

are treating them like little children who are not allowed to know about some things. Sharing your feelings shows that you have a relationship with the teenagers, that you want to be honest with them, and that you treat them very seriously.

So here we are back to the trust you began with.

Yes, because it is the foundation for building relations with teenagers. The moment you trust each other – the moment you trust teenagers and they trust you – it may turn out that the stereotypes describing this period are not entirely true. Instead of rebellious young people challenging adults' opinions, you may discover their sensitive, creative face going beyond the patterns, and cooperative teenagers looking for answers to the questions that are crucial to them: "Who am I?" and "What am I like?"

Developmental characteristics of teenagers

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It is crucial to link the subject with young people's dilemmas and experiences, listen to them, and take their perspectives into account.

Adolescence, or growing up, is the time between the age of 10 or 11 and the 18th birthday. It begins with puberty and continues throughout the school period, until finishing school and entering adulthood. It is hard to identify its exact onset – teenagers begin puberty at different ages; likewise, it is hard to pinpoint its end. After all, we are living in times when – especially in Western culture – the period of education is extended to include studies and, consequently, the moment of entry into adulthood and taking on activities characteristic of adulthood such as becoming independent, getting a job, or starting a family. This change is sufficiently significant for some psychologists to suggest distinguishing an additional developmental stage between adolescence and adulthood – "emerging adulthood" – that would span the time between 19 and 25–30 years of age[1].

However, not to additionally complicate the already complicated issues, for the purposes of this book we assume that adolescence is the period between the age of 11 (the fourth grade of primary school) and 19 (completion of secondary school). In psychology, this period is divided into two stages: the first one from 11 to 15/16 years of age and the second one until the 19th birthday. Thus, early adolescence can be seen as located between the fourth and eighth grades of primary school and early adolescence as coinciding with the secondary school stage of education. This division is necessary here, because each of these periods is characterized by different developmental elements, which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

We will present the characteristics of development in early and late adolescence, distinguishing those features that are the most relevant for education and art classes.

1 Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*, New York 2004.

Early adolescence

Physical and motor development

The beginning of adolescence is linked with the onset of puberty. This immensely important time is immediately discernible with the naked eye, and its exact onset depends on many factors. Girls usually begin to grow up earlier than boys, and the onset of their puberty is influenced by both biological factors (weight; race; genetic factors) and environmental ones – their family situation and dietary habits. However, before the child's figure changes into masculine or feminine, hormones begin their work. Changes in teenagers' bodies, which are related to the endocrine system, are a long-lasting process that begins as early as childhood, and the organ responsible for the secretion of various hormones is the pituitary gland. In both sexes, the adrenal glands secrete hormones similar to androgens that contribute to the growth of bones and muscles. The adrenal glands increase the production of adrenal androgens approximately between the age of six and eight, both in boys and in girls. The next stage is the secretion of hormones by the sex glands. At that time, male testicles secrete large amounts of testosterone and other male hormones (known as androgens) stimulating the production of growth hormone, responsible for the pubertal spurt. Androgens are also responsible for the development of male sexual organs and are significant for the sex drive in adulthood. In pubescent girls, at the same time, the ovaries produce large amounts of basic female hormones, progesterone and oestrogen, which considerably accelerates maturation by stimulating the production of growth hormone and causing the pubertal spurt. It is oestrogen that is responsible for the growth of the breasts, pubic hair, and female sexual organs and for the control of the menstrual cycle in the female reproductive period.

The pubertal spurt is the first clear sign of adolescence in teenagers – they begin to grow faster, and their body mass increases. Boys and girls grow at different rates: for girls, the peak of the pubertal growth spurt take place before they turn 12, while boys experience this peak at around the age of 13[2]. Total body mass also increases in both sexes, but in different ways. Girls gain fatty tissue in their chest, hips, and buttocks, while boys become wider in the shoulders. These changes in body proportions result in a disturbance of the centre of gravity, hence the impression of a certain temporary motor awkwardness in teenagers during that period. The successive stages of puberty are associated with the emergence of breasts, body hair, and menstruation in girls and with voice change, the emergence of body and facial hair, changes in the size of sexual organs, and ejaculation in boys.

The fact that the emergence of the above-mentioned changes varies across individuals has different consequences both for boys and for girls. In a girl, earlier onset of puberty compared to peers may lead to greater difficulty accepting her body and to engagement in dangerous activities – an excessively strict diet or risky exercises – as a result of the discomfort experienced. Girls who go through puberty early experience long-term adjustment problems, such as anxiety or depression, much more often than other groups[3], but at the same time they are more popular with boys and more willing to join older peer groups, which results in more frequent engagement in dating and risky behaviours such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and too early

2 Christina A. Geithner, Takashi Satake, Barbara Woynarowska, Robert M. Malina, "Adolescent spurts in body dimensions: Average and modal sequences", *American Journal of Human Biology* 1999, vol. 11, issue 3, pp. 287–295.

3 Riittakerttu Kaltiala-Heino, Elise Kosunen, Matti Rimpelä, "Pubertal timing, sexual behaviour and self-reported depression in middle adolescence", *Journal of Adolescence* 2003, vol. 26, issue 5, pp. 531–545.

sexual initiation. In boys, going through puberty earlier than other boys may have a positive effect on building self-image – they are perceived as more socially competent, attractive, and self-confident, and are therefore more readily accepted by peers. At the same time, however, this group is marked by higher risk of using various forbidden substances and other behavioural problems, such as aggressiveness and involvement in criminal gangs.

Early adolescence is also a time of important changes in the functioning of the nervous system. The following changes are observed:

1. increased activity of the nucleus accumbens (involved in predicting positive and negative results of actions and related to the experience of reward and pleasure);

2. lower activity of the reward system (resulting in the need for stronger stimulation to achieve the optimal level of pleasure);

3. a high level of dopamine in the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system (stronger sensation seeking and novelty seeking);

4. the prefrontal cortex, involved in the control of behaviours and emotions and in making decisions, becomes smaller and gets reorganized (this area is important for planning and thinking about the consequences of the decisions made).

How is this related to teenagers' everyday functioning? The lower activity of the reward system on the one hand and increased dopamine secretion on the other mean that, in teenagers, various stimuli fairly quickly result in a pleasure signal being sent, but the amount of stimulation itself has to be greater. This is why teenagers continually seek new sensations – which,

of course, has its advantages, because they explore the world and pursue their passions, but it can also lead to risky behaviours, an example being internet "challenges." The reorganization of the prefrontal cortex that takes place during this time results in teenage individuals who, once they engage in action, are unable to predict its long-term consequences. They also have reduced emotional control, hence the frequent "outbursts" (potentially surprising for other people around because they may be more frequent than in early school-age children).

Adolescence is also when the senses are most sharpened. Further developmental changes take place regarding and smell and taste, and taste preferences change – the preference for sweet taste diminishes, while sensitivity to sour and umami tastes increases. Teenagers are more eager to try new dishes and may even come to like those that used to put them off. A clear difference between boys and girls is visible in the development of the sense of smell – girls become much more sensitive to various smells than boys[4].

Cognitive development

With age, teenagers' attention spans grow longer; they are now able to focus on lessons and activities, work on a task, or learn on their own for a longer time[5]. What is more, young people also learn to manage their attention –

4 Richard L. Doty, E. Leslie Cameron, "Sex differences and reproductive hormone influences on human odor perception", *Physiology & Behavior* 2009, vol. 97, issue 2, pp. 213–228; Thomas Hummel, Gerd Kobal, Hilmar Gudziol, Alan Mackay-Sim, "Normative data for the "Sniffin' Sticks" including tests of odor identification, odor discrimination, and olfactory thresholds: An upgrade based on a group of more than 3,000 subjects", *European Archives of Oto-Rhino-Laryngology* 2007, vol. 264, issue 3, pp. 237–243.

5 Kathleen E. McKay, Jeffrey M. Halperin, Susan T. Schwartz, Vanshdeep Sharma, "Developmental analysis of three aspects of information processing: Sustained attention,

in other words, to ignore what is unnecessary or distracts them and to switch their attention between tasks or activities more effectively.

What becomes an important element influencing young people's concentration in their teenage years is motivation. The task, the subject matter, or the type of activity they are supposed to engage in must be simply interesting to them – a task that is too easy, too difficult, or generally uninteresting leads to difficulties in finding motivation and shortens the span of attention devoted to its completion.

Changes also take place in the domain of teenagers' memory skills. Working memory capacity increases, which results from information processing being faster than in previous developmental stages and from the use of diverse cognitive strategies, such as repetition, organization, or elaboration (linking newly assimilated material with previously acquired knowledge), making it possible to store larger amounts of information in the short-term memory and to process it better. In the initial stage of learning specific cognitive strategies, their effectiveness is low because the very application of the strategies requires effort and uses up a large amount of cognitive resources. For example, a teenager may devote more attention to generating associations or categories according to which they can organize information than to the very process of memorizing this information. It is only after some time that the use of specific strategies becomes automatic and cognitive resources can be directed, above all, towards memorizing and processing information.

Further changes concern the development of thinking. According to Jean Piaget, teenagers' cognitive development enters the formal operational

selective attention, and response organization", *Developmental Neuropsychology* 1994, vol. 10, issue 2, pp. 121–132.

stage. While concrete operations (characteristic of younger school-age children) are mental actions performed on objects, namely on tangible things and known events, formal operations are actions performed on ideas. Consequently, a young person who has entered the formal operational stage begins to reason logically about that which they cannot experience directly. In other words, formal-operational thinking is more hypothetical and abstract than thinking in the concrete operational stage; it also involves the use of a more systematic and scientific approach to solving problems[6].

The cognitive operations that develop in this stage of development are:

1. hypothetical-deductive reasoning – reasoning from the general to the specific; the ability to verify various hypotheses emerging from a general theory and general principles in order to solve a given problem;

2. inductive (inductive scientific) reasoning – reasoning from the specific to the general, in which one observes or analyses cases or situations in order to determine general principles, rules, and patterns. The purpose of this process is to develop understanding based on the observation of patterns in order to determine how something works;

3. abstract reasoning – the ability to perform cognitive operations on abstract concepts, hypotheses, and symbols;

4. decontextualization – the ability to distinguish previously acquired knowledge and beliefs from the demands of the current task.

6 Bärbel Inhelder, Jean Piaget, *The early growth of logic in the child: Classification and seriation*, London 1964.

However, the transition from concrete operations to formal operations takes place gradually over the years. Numerous scholars consider it useful to distinguish the early and late phases of the formal operational stage. In early adolescence, teenagers still make mistakes in logical and abstract reasoning, for example in hypothetical-deductive reasoning, organized inference, and the understanding of abstract concepts. With development and thanks to educational interventions, successive formal reasoning skills are practised, and both teenagers and adults master them increasingly well.

What does this mean in practice? Teenagers develop completely new skills: they can draw conclusions based on situations (deduction) and the other way around – they can use the information they possess for a specific task (induction). Teenagers' thinking no longer refers exclusively to the "here and now." They can, for instance, apply the rules of functioning known from everyday life to completely different literary worlds. At this stage, originality appears in creativity and thinking, which considerably broadens the range of options for work during classes. A vivid example of the changes taking place can be the task of drawing an alien. When depicting this kind of figure, children will rely on what they know (the alien will have legs, arms, etc.), while teenagers' creative imagination may lead them into totally different regions, beyond the patterns. Importantly, all these abilities continue to develop throughout adolescence.

Piaget believed that intuitive thinking – based on associations and personal experience – was replaced by scientific reasoning (based on logic) during the child's development, but it turned out that these two forms of reasoning – intuitive and scientific – coexisted in subsequent developmental periods[7]. The ability to switch between intuitive and scientific thinking allows

7 Paul A. Klaczynski, "Motivated scientific reasoning biases, epistemological beliefs, and theory polarization: A two-process approach to adolescent cognition", *Child*

them to be flexible when solving problems. Like children and adults, teenagers often use an intuitive or experimental strategy, which leads to conclusions incompatible with scientific thinking[8].

Teenagers master the skills of abstract thinking, solving logical riddles, and efficient reasoning, both deductive and inductive. In the initial phase, these newly acquired skills are rather rigid. This results in the emergence of a kind of youthful idealism/absolutism, or a tendency to seek logic in describing and understanding all surrounding phenomena, even those that elude the laws of logic. What is also characteristic of teenagers is adolescent egocentrism, defined as a tendency to perceive one's dilemmas as exceptional and the belief that others are carefully observing one's actions.

David Elkind found that teenagers' egocentrism was a consequence of their developed ability to reflect on thinking – their own and other people's[9]. He described two types of adolescent egocentrism: the imaginary audience and personal fable. The imaginary audience phenomenon

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Development 2000, vol. 71, issue 5, pp. 1347–1366; idem, "Analytic and heuristic processing influences on adolescent reasoning and decision-making", *Child Development* 2001, vol. 72, issue 3, pp. 844–861; idem, "Cognitive and social cognitive development: Dual-process research and theory", in: *In two minds: Dual processes and beyond*, ed. Jonathan Evans, Keith Frankish, Oxford 2009, pp. 265–292.

8 Eric Amsel, Paul A. Klaczynski, Adam Johnston, Shane Bench, Jason Close, Eric Sadler, Rick Walker, "A dual-process account of the development of scientific reasoning: The nature and development of metacognitive intercession skills", *Cognitive Development* 2008, vol. 23, issue 4, pp. 452–471; Paul A. Klaczynski, "*Analytic and heuristic processing…*", op. cit., pp. 844–861.

9 David Elkind, "Egocentrism in adolescence", *Child Development* 1967, vol. 38, issue 4, pp. 1025–1034.

consists in reflecting on what a hypothetical audience thinks about one's behaviour (for example, a teenager may think that other people continually focus their attention on them and will easily notice their mistakes). The personal fable is a tendency to believe that I and my thoughts and feelings are exceptional (for example, a teenager may think that no one understands their feelings because no one experiences them as intensely as they do). While the imaginary audience stems from the inability to distinguish between one's own mental states and other people's thoughts, the personal fable results from this distinction being excessively strong. The personal fable may also lead teenagers to form an impression that the rules that apply to others do not apply to them – as a result, the stronger the adolescent egocentrism, the stronger the young people's tendency to engage in risky behaviours[10]. The lack of self-confidence associated with the imaginary audience and a sense of being exceptional associated with the personal fable are most clearly visible in the early stage of adolescence and grow weaker as the person develops[11].

Moreover, the research conducted by Joanna Bell and Rachel Bromnick suggest that the reason why teenagers are preoccupied by how they present

10 Kathryn Greene, Donald Rubin, Jerold Hale, L.H. Walters, "The utility of understanding adolescent egocentrism in designing health promotion messages", *Health Communication* 1996, vol. 8, pp. 131–152; Grayson N. Holmbeck, Raymond E. Crossman, Mary L. Wandrei, Elizabeth Gasiewski, "Cognitive development, egocentrism, self-esteem, and adolescent contraceptive knowledge, attitudes, and behavior", *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 1994, vol. 23, pp. 169–193.

11 David Elkind, Robert Bowen, "Imaginary audience behavior in children and adolescents", *Developmental Psychology* 1979, vol. 15, issue 1, pp. 38–44; Robert D. Enright, Daniel K. Lapsley, Diane G. Shukla, "Adolescent egocentrism in early and late adolescence", *Adolescence* 1979, vol. 14, issue 56, pp. 687–695.

themselves in public is not the imaginary audience but the real one[12]. In other words, teenagers are aware that the way they present themselves has real consequences. Their popularity and peer acceptance as well as their self-esteem and self-confidence are frequently a result of how others (the real audience) perceive them.

The development of thinking and certain initial difficulties in applying the cognitive skills acquired can contribute to the development of creativity. In the early stage of adolescence, teenagers practise new skills, and sometimes they try to find new ways to solve the tasks and problems they encounter, going off the beaten track. This kind of approach may, of course, result in mistakes, but above all it offers a space for original and creative ways of presenting reality, solving problems, and generating associations. Teenagers become extremely creative.

How does all this influence everyday life? In this period, teenagers begin to think in a more complex and logical way, but they often make mistakes in inference and reasoning. What may be surprising to adults is the inconsistency in young people's functioning at this age – in some situations they will show "adult" thinking and give arguments to support their views, while on other occasions they will react emotionally rather than rationally, as we would expect them to; they may have difficulties taking account of all facts, arguments, or other people's perspectives.

It is worth remembering, too, that teenagers feel observed and evaluated all the time, which may be a source of discomfort and uncertainty. It also seems to them that they are the only ones experiencing what they feel at

12 Joanna H. Bell, Rachel D. Bromnick, "The social reality of the imaginary audience: A grounded theory approach", *Adolescence* 2003, vol. 38, issue 150, pp. 205–219.

a given moment and that no one is going through the kind of dilemmas they are going through. Adults' attempts to impose their own interpretations of reality may not bring the desired outcomes – cognitive development is a process, and changes take place gradually.

In this period, support for teenagers – protecting them also against depressiveness – may consist in sharing their experiences with the peer group. On the one hand, they may find understanding there; on the other, they may become acquainted with a kind of diversity of experience. An important role for adults to play consists in showing teenagers that adjustment to the world does not mean losing one's individuality.

Language development

Teenagers' language development observed during adolescence is associated with vocabulary expansion, the increasing ability to produce longer utterances (including written ones, such as an essay or a story), and the development of metalinguistic awareness – the development of knowledge about language. Regarding vocabulary expansion, there is a visible increase in the comprehension and use of abstract concepts. Teenagers cope increasingly well with defining concepts by referring to higher order categories and to characteristics and functions specific to a given concept. The increase in language skills in the domain of metalinguistic awareness is linked with education: it is during literature classes that young people broaden their knowledge on different aspects of language – grammar, semantics, and pragmatics.

A characteristic feature of adolescents' language development is the use of slang. It is a set of language units (usually lexical) used by a distinguishable group of people in a specific communicative context, for example among people who share certain interests. Slang is significant for the sense of belonging to

a particular group and allows its members to distinguish themselves from other groups – for example, from adults. With the development of technology and social media, apart from slang in language, what is also observed among young people is the increasingly wide usage of various abbreviations, emoji, pictograms, and memes, which constitute an important communication code on social media. Language is also a domain of teenagers' creativity, not only in the form of diverse literary texts (poetry, prose) but also in the form of neologisms.

Self-regulation development

Early adolescence is a time of changes in the prefrontal cortex, which is connected with executive functions – the higher cognitive processes involved in taking intentional actions, solving problems, and controlling beha-viours, emotions, and lower cognitive processes.

In their research, Philip Zelazo, Jacob Anderson, Jennifer Richler, Kathleen Wallner-Allen, Jennifer Beaumont, and Sandra Weintraub found that the intensive growth of executive functions took place in the preschool period and that their further development, no longer so substantial, was observed in late childhood and adolescence[13]. The peak of achievement for executive functions is the age of 25, with performance level remaining stable subsequently until late adulthood, when it decreases.

Teenagers can already suppress the reaction that imposes itself, delay gratification, manage their attention (which allows them to cope with

13 Philip David Zelazo, Jacob E. Anderson, Jennifer Richler, Kathleen Wallner-Allen, Jennifer L. Beaumont, Sandra Weintraub, "II. NIH Toolbox Cognition Battery (CB): Measuring executive function and attention", *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 2013, vol. 78, issue 4, pp. 16–33.

learning), and regulate their actions and emotions more effectively, adjusting to the changing demands or situations. Their skills of planning, monitoring, and organizing activities are still developing, however, which means certain difficulties in accomplishing long-term goals and predicting the consequences of their actions. They experience greater difficulties with self-control – the control of their actions and emotions – in so-called "hot" situations, which involve motivational and emotional factors, compared to "cool" situations, when it is necessary to adjust to the situation, but doing so evokes neither emotions nor commitment. Angela Prencipe, Amanda Kesek, Julia Cohen, Connie Lamm, Marc Lewis, and Philip Zelazo examined children aged 8–14 years who did tasks measuring "cool" and "hot" aspects of executive functions and found that the children coped with the former considerably earlier than they did with the latter[14].

What does this mean in practice? At this stage, teenagers cope increasingly well with maintaining attention and planning their actions. They can already restrain impulsive reactions. Their brain is still under construction, however – they find it difficult to use the relatively new emotion management, attention management, and planning skills if the tasks too difficult or too easy for them. They may also have difficulties inhibiting their own behaviours and controlling their emotions in situations inducing strong emotional arousal, for example when discussing matters of outlook among strongly polarized debaters or when raising controversial issues.

Moreover, teenagers exhibit a certain rigidity of thinking: they formulate and accept those arguments that support their opinion, and during debates on

14 Angela Prencipe, Amanda Kesek, Julia Cohen, Connie Lamm, Marc D. Lewis, Philip David Zelazo, "Development of hot and cool executive function during the transition to adolescence", *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 2011, vol. 108, issue 3, pp. 621–637.

issues they consider exciting they still find it difficult to use logical and critical thinking skills. They also often adopt the demotivating view that, since everyone can have a subjective opinion, it is impossible to establish anything.

What can support teenagers and facilitate conducting classes is to make a contract stating that everyone has the right to express their views and at the same time clearly setting the limits of discussion – for example, forbidding *ad hominem* arguments. This allows young people to explore a diversity of perspectives and views with a sense of security. This is also a space in which adolescents can experience that there are certain higher values or non-negotiable issues, such as human rights.

Socioemotional development

As a result of the changes connected with puberty, the phenomenon of gender intensification is observed in early adolescence. Hormonal changes and body changes lead to teenagers exaggerating the differences between the sexes and exhibiting more rigid perceptions of gender roles – that is, of what they believe to be characteristic of women and men. They more strongly try to emphasize the external features of behaviours typical of their sex. In this period, teenagers more strongly experience pressure to adjust to the peer group, which begins to play an important role in their development. One of the central developmental needs in this period is precisely the need for peer acceptance.

The structure of peer groups changes in late childhood and adolescence[15]. In late childhood, girls and boys join cliques composed of same-sex

15 Dexter C. Dunphy, "The social structure of urban adolescent peer groups", *Sociometry* 1963, vol. 26, issue 2, pp. 230–246; Wyndol Furman, Andrew W. Collins, "Adolescent romantic

individuals, namely small groups of friends. They have little contact with individuals of the other sex at that time. In adolescence, by contract, boy and girl cliques begin to interact, forming gangs of individuals of both sexes. Together, they engage in various activities – parties, trips, outings, etc. Those who become members of cliques and then members of mixed-sex friend groups (and this is not what happens in everyone's case) have many opportunities to get to know individuals of the opposite sex – as friends or romantic partners. It is at this stage that the first romantic relationships are formed.

The need for belonging and peer acceptance is also associated with increased conformism, observable in this period. Teenagers more often agree with the opinions held by the group and adopt the perspective of the majority. They find it more difficult to voice their opinion or view if the view differs from the one held by the majority of the group they belong to or want to belong to. An important element of development in this period is the acquisition of assertiveness, which allows teenagers to refuse or express a different view, with respect for others but also in conformity with their own emerging outlook. Increased conformism with peers frequently goes hand in hand with increased nonconformism with adults and towards the established models, traditions, or views. Social development in this period is strongly related to identity development. Teenagers try to find their place in the social world in which they function.

How does this translate into everyday life? The need for acceptance by the group is teenagers' key characteristic. On the one hand, its fulfilment can be developmental – in the case of belonging to a supportive peer group in which teenagers develop their various passions and build friendships. On

relationships and experiences", in: *Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups*, ed. Kenneth H. Rubin, William M. Bukowski, Brett Laursen, New York 2009, pp. 341–360.

the other – there can be destructive groups (for example, neofascist ones), where nonconformism means rejection. Seeking acceptance from peers may also foster a tendency to engage in risky behaviours. This makes it important to show the multiplicity and diversity of the groups one can belong to and at the same time strengthen the foundation of universal values.

Because teenagers' characteristic feature is their focus on the self, and because their main point of reference is their peers, what adults propose may seem unattractive to them. If we wish to keep teenagers engaged during classes, it is crucial to link the subject with young people's dilemmas and experiences, listen to them, and take their perspectives into account.

Just like younger children need a secure base to explore the world that surrounds them, teenagers need both a sense of security and encouragement from supportive parents to explore in order to become independent and autonomous individuals[16]. Teenagers may feel an internal conflict: on the one hand they try to be more autonomous from their parents, while on the other they still need parental support. The key to success at this age is maintaining a balance between exploration and attachment[17]. Teenagers who enjoy a secure attachment relationship with their parents have a generally stronger sense of personal identity, higher self-esteem, higher social skills, and fewer behavioural problems and are better emotionally adjusted than their less securely attached peers.

16 Miri Scharf, Ofra Mayseless, Inbal Kivenson-Baron, "Adolescents' attachment representations and developmental tasks in emerging adulthood", *Developmental Psychology* 2004, vol. 40, issue 3, pp. 430–444.

17 Joseph P. Allen, "The attachment system in adolescence", in: *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy, Phillip R. Shaver, New York 2008, pp. 419–435.

In their emotional development, teenagers move on to the next stage of understanding emotions – they begin to understand complex emotions. As their cognitive and language development progresses, they improve their understanding of feelings such as love or hope – they can recognize and describe them. They distinguish different levels of a given emotion and begin to use an increasingly wide vocabulary describing emotions; for instance, they differentiate between annoyance or irritation and frustration, anger, or fury. In early adolescence, teenagers also start to understand and accept the ambivalence of emotions towards one object, event, or person; for instance, they can understand and cope with the simultaneous experience of excitement about and fear of sleeping in a tent for the first time or simultaneously feeling a liking for and anger at a friend they have had an argument with. Thanks to the development of self-regulation, they can refrain from showing emotions in less acceptable ways and behave more appropriately for a particular situation. Due to hormonal changes, however, teenagers exhibit emotional lability – frequent and quick mood changes or impulsive emotional reactions, frequently out of proportion to the stimulus that caused them. Emotional lability and self-regulation difficulties are also related to the changes in the nervous system observed in this period.

How does this translate into everyday life? Teenagers may experience sudden and significant changes of mood. It is essential to remember that the quick emergence of completely different emotions does not mean that those experienced a moment earlier were not genuine or not important. Emotional reactions may appear suddenly and may quickly reach a high level of arousal. They are a response to external stimuli and to internal ones – reflections, memories, and thoughts about the future. The sinusoidal fluctuation and high intensity of moods are associated with changes in the functioning of the nervous system and with hormones, which means it

takes time for all the necessary processes to come to completion and for teenagers to develop adequate self-regulation strategies.

It should also be noted that depressiveness is a tendency to experience periodic mood deterioration, lack of energy, and reluctance to engage in any kind of activity – such states may periodically occur in teenagers. In such situations, young people need a chance to talk about their feelings to people close to them; they need understanding for their feelings, the development of cognitive skills that allow them to evaluate the emerging cognitive distortions (exaggerated and/or irrational patterns of thinking that can maintain and solidify low mood), and stimulation – encouragement to act. Depressiveness is not depression, but the circumstances and biological changes that take place in adolescence (including changes in the build of the body, new social roles, and comparing oneself to others) increase the risk of depression as a disorder. Its symptoms can be mood deterioration, loss of interest in or satisfaction with the activities that usually give the person pleasure, low energy or high fatigability, negative self-thoughts, an increase or decrease in appetite, and difficulties concentrating or engaging in cognitive tasks. In case of depression symptoms, specialist help is needed.

Personality development

According to Erik Erikson, the most important developmental task in adolescence is the formation of individual identity[18]. Erikson also pointed out that, in the societies of his day, the principles, customs, and ways of life were too diverse and too weakly defined to provide young people with indisputable categories for building their identity. Since the time when

[18] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and crisis*, New York 1968.

Erikson advanced his thesis, further changes have occurred in civilizational, cultural, and technological development; as a result, adolescents' difficulties in looking for reliable and clear information, rules, values, and models based on which they could answers to the question "Who am I?" have deepened even more. The development of the Internet, the ease of access to information, and at the same time the large number of contradictory unverified opinions and pieces of information make building self-knowledge and identity in the era of globalization an exceptionally difficult challenge for teenagers.

Let us, however, begin with defining the concepts relevant to this subsection. A contemporary scholar investigating the development of the self, Michael Lewis, distinguished two aspects of the self: the mechanism of the self and the idea of the self[19]. The mechanism of the self refers to the biological and cognitive processes that organize human experience and allow a person to perceive themselves as a being distinct from others and stable in time. These processes are partly unconscious and constitute the individual's subjective self-awareness. The idea of the self is an element of conscious self-reflection, cognitive representation of the self, and self-knowledge, which always includes all categories a person uses to describe and refer to themselves. The mechanism of the self develops from the earliest stages of life and concerns discovering one's distinctness – initially physical and then psychological. The development of self-knowledge, the idea of the self, also has its sources in the earliest years of life. What psychologists consider to be the first sign of self-knowledge development is the ability to recognize oneself in a mirror, which emerges between 18 and 24 months of age. The development of cognitive

19 Michael Lewis, "The self in self-conscious emotions", *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 1992, vol. 57, pp. 85–95.

processes and language, social experiences, and emotional development are related to the evolution of self-knowledge in subsequent stages of development. The self develops in the context of relations with others and culture understood in a broad sense[20].

Adolescence is an important point in building self-knowledge because teenagers begin to consciously ask themselves the question "Who am I?" and engage in self-reflection, looking for and verifying various kinds of information about themselves. According to Susan Harter, mature self-knowledge is a set of assertions that make up a coherent system of abstract concepts used to describe and explain one's own behaviours[21]. Teenagers start to link and coordinate various assertions about themselves and build them into a hierarchically structured idea of themselves.

In early adolescence, the key elements of self-knowledge are terms concerning abilities and characteristics associated with engaging in social interactions and social attractiveness. At that time, teenagers' self-images include individual and unrelated though already abstract representations. They are often contrary and hard to combine. As a result, teenagers may experience internal conflicts due to the social pressure they feel, combining different roles (a child, a student, a friend, a romantic partner), and functioning in diverse social contexts. Towards the end of late adolescence, thanks to self-reflection and more frequently thinking about "how others perceive me" (the imaginary/real audience mentioned above), more coherent systems are formed, in which characteristics are coordinated and

20 Judy Dunn, *The beginnings of social understanding,* Cambridge 1988; Barbara Rogoff, *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*, New York 1990.

21 Susan Harter, *The construction of the self: Developmental and sociocultural foundations*, London 2012.

in which the inconsistent or contradictory ones are integrated. Teenagers notice that their various traits or behaviours can be manifested to different degrees in different social contexts, as appropriate for different social expectations and requirements.

According to Józef Kozielecki, the sources of self-knowledge are:

1. social information (opinions, evaluations, feedback from individuals or groups important to the child, quality of the relationship with the caregiver);

2. personal information (balance of successes and failures, personal opinions and judgements, outcomes of self-reflection);

3. biological information (information from the body, associated with the process of biological maturation)[22].

As far as social information is concerned, what also plays an important role is the media, the Internet, commercials, and periodicals, which are vehicles of sociocultural models concerning appearance, fashion, lifestyle, etc. In the era of globalization, adolescents have access to diverse models and patterns. Some of these are changing – for instance, fashion-related patterns or popular social media content.

The identity development process starts as early as infancy, but it is the stage of adolescence that has the greatest significance for identity

22 Józef Kozielecki, *Psychologiczna teoria samowiedzy*, Warsaw 1981.

formation[23]. This is due to the already discussed changes in the cognitive domain and in the sphere of moral development and to a greater focus on one's unique history, abilities, and goals. The identity crisis characteristic of adolescence can be described as experiencing a conflict on the emotional and cognitive levels between the uncertainty-induced need to redefine oneself and one's place in life and the resources available for the achievement of this goal – personal and community resources.

Two types of activities are involved in the process of identity formation. The first ones, manifesting themselves in the phase of experiencing the crisis, are orientation and exploration activities, which consist in seeking out and accumulating information, asking questions, challenging or testing various options, experimenting, and critically reflecting on one's values, beliefs, and roles and on the areas of one's previous identifications. The other type of activities, manifesting itself in the phase of overcoming the crisis (coping with the crisis), is commitment activities, which consist in selecting and choosing goals, integrating them into a coherent whole, making decisions on the level of engagement in their realization, accepting and making the commitments this involves, and – finally – engaging in the realization of the commitments made. The latter side of identity formation concerns the investment of one's energy and long-term engagement in various practical and ideological domains, such as religion, politics, occupation/work, sexual activity, and social relations. An integrated and coherent set of diverse commitments and engagement constitutes the core of individual identity, thus giving it a distinctive form – seen as distinctive also by others. The identity crisis ends in the formation of identity – in identity taking a specific shape.

23 James E. Marcia, "Identity in adolescence", in: *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, ed. Joseph Adelson, New York 1980, pp. 159–187.

James Marcia distinguished four identity statuses, which are consecutive stages in the identity formation process:

1. identity diffusion – rare and chaotic exploration or no exploration combined with making no commitments or decisions;

2. identity moratorium – frequent and diverse exploration, still without making commitments or decisions;

3. identity foreclosure – exploration absent, rare, or limited to selected areas (usually chosen and controlled by others), combined with making commitments designated by others;

4. identity achievement – frequent and diverse exploration, making choices and decisions, engaging in their implementation, and identification with the choices made.

According to Michael Berzonsky, identity is a structure composed of constructs and schemata, which constitute the cognitive basis for decision-making processes and the search for key answers to questions about the meaning and purpose of the individual[24]. His theory of the self concerns who a person thinks they are and how they want to answer the question "Who am I as a person living in the current reality?" and questions about their preferences, possibilities, abilities, and skills enabling the achievement of goals in the future. Identity as a process channels and controls the resources that the teenager uses for coping and adjustment in everyday life.

24 Michael Berzonsky, "A social-cognitive perspective on identity construction", in: Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, Vivian L. Vignoles, *Handbook of identity: Theory and research*, New York – London 2011, pp. 55–76.

Berzonsky distinguished three identity styles, describing the way teenagers look for the information they need to construct answers to the question "Who am I?" The first one is the informational style – teenagers with this style are self-reflective, actively look for information concerning the self, explore, want to get to know themselves, are open to new information, and are inclined to modify themselves based on feedback. Teenagers with a normative style adopt the expectations, principles, and values of people important to them, and their main aim is to protect their views shaped in this way and to protect themselves against information incompatible with their beliefs and values. Such teenagers react badly to ambivalence and ambiguities relating to the aspects of their self. Finally, adolescents with a diffuse-avoidant style do not have consistent beliefs regarding their self, postpone solving problems until later, and are reluctant to make important decisions and to confront personal problems and identity conflicts.

What does this mean in practice? Teenagers' key questions are "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to be?", which is why they look for various kinds of information and explore possible answers. Exploration alone does not require commitment – it is therefore natural for adolescents to take up activities – playing a musical instrument, drawing, practising a sport, participating in social or ideological organizations – and often rather quickly give up the activity they have chosen. There is nothing wrong with that. On the contrary, this is an important stage of identity development and formation – an opportunity to get to know oneself and learn about various possibilities of pursuing self-fulfilment.

How identity formation proceeds and which stage in this process a particular person reaches depends both on the environment (which determined the area of exploration and provides models) and on individual

predispositions (such as a tendency to defy and look for a way out of the known patterns or to accept the existing options).

Creativity development

Adolescence is a time when teenagers begin to look for various ways of expressing themselves, also through various forms of creativity and art. One of the most popular forms is writing – for example, writing poems or short stories. In this manner, teenagers try to describe their feelings and present their experiences or their views and perspectives. Vocabulary expansion, combined with the development of knowledge concerning various literary forms and devices, results in increasingly abstract and metaphorical ways of describing both the external and internal worlds of young people's experiences. An important element in language creativity is neologisms, which can quickly become popular and enter young people's slang via social media.

Another popular form of self-expression is plastic art. According to Stefan Szuman's theory of the development of graphism, what is characteristic of adolescence is the physioplastic stage – comprising the sensational and intellectual realism phases – in which the drawn representation of reality is based on direct observation[25]. Szuman believes that at the beginning of this period teenagers have a tendency to draw "from nature" – to draw what they can see. They try to express a sensational perspective, namely, to reproduce as accurately as possible what they currently perceive. When depicting various genre scenes with elements of landscape, teenagers are already able to keep the right proportions, create compositions, and use geometric planes in the pictures they draw. Their compositions begin to

25 Stefan Szuman, *Sztuka dziecka. Psychologia twórczości rysunkowej dziecka*, Warsaw 1990.

comprise multiple elements and layers. The colours are highly vivid, with a tendency to gradually evolve towards local colours – less contrasting and less distinctive but at the same time more delicate and refined than pure colours. This period is marked by the appearance of experimental ways of drawing and by seeking a personal style. Teenagers also begin to use symbols, associations, and metaphors and try to express them in their creative work.

Modern technologies make it possible not only to create pictures using graphic programs, but also to make attempts to express oneself and present one's experiences by means of photos or videos. On the Internet, one can find many tutorials and ideas on how to take interesting photographs, selfies, and videos. Young people often use such materials, as shown by trends of taking specific types of photographs.

Various forms of expression may differ in character among teenagers, being either private or public. Some adolescents create for their own needs – to release tensions and negative emotions, express themselves, or try to understand their experiences and the surrounding world – and their works are not shown to a larger group of people or not shared with others at all. Some, by contrast, make their works available and share them with a wide audience, for example via social media, thus seeking acceptance. Sharing one's works with a wide audience, however, carries a risk of facing criticism and hate, which take a characteristic form on social media due to the online disinhibition effect. This effect is associated with the assumptions Internet users make (you cannot see me; you do not know me; this is only a joke; this is not really me), which affect their behaviour and reduce their self-control.

Other forms of creative expression popular among teenagers are dance and music.

Late adolescence

In late adolescence, which roughly coincides with the secondary school stage of education, the changes in physical and sexual development are no longer so intense. What is observed in that period is the development of teenagers' personality and worldview, associated with further stages of cognitive and social development.

Physical development

In most teenagers in late adolescence, the process of puberty is already in progress. In some individuals, however, it is delayed compared to their peers. This delay and comparing themselves to others can contribute to a decrease in teenagers' self-esteem. Girls who experienced delayed onset of puberty may experience anxiety about it. Delayed puberty in boys can also be associated with lower self-confidence and lower self-esteem (stemming, among other things, from being the shortest person in the class) or with the emergence of adjustment and behavioural difficulties[26].

[26] Judith S. Dubas, Julia A. Graber, Anne C. Petersen, "The effects of pubertal development on achievement during adolescence", *American Journal of Education* 1994, vol. 99, issue 4, pp. 444–460; Riittakerttu Kaltiala-Heino, Mauri Marttunen, Päivi Rantanen, Matti Rimpelä, "Early puberty is associated with mental health problems in middle adolescence", *Social Science & Medicine* 2003, vol. 57, issue 6, pp. 1055–1064; Sarah D. Lynne, Julia A. Graber, Tracy R. Nichols, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Gilbert J. Botvin, "Links between pubertal timing, peer influences, and externalizing behaviors among urban students followed through middle school", *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2007, vol. 40, p. 181.

Cognitive development

In this period, teenagers' thinking becomes increasingly logical. The number of errors in logical inference decreases compared to the previous stage of adolescence. One of the experiments measuring the development of scientific reasoning revealed that teenagers were able to distinguish examples of good and bad experiments using scientific reasoning as early as around the age of 12, but it was not until about the age 18 that they could reason in a logical, scientific way and plan an appropriate scientific experiment on their own to test specific hypotheses[27].

Practical application of logical and scientific reasoning develops in late adolescence; it is related to education and to whether teenagers have an opportunity to learn scientific reasoning, for example as part of mathematical and scientific education[28]. What teenagers find the most difficult about scientific reasoning in this period is accepting evidence inconsistent with their previous beliefs[29], which can also translate into difficulties in

27 Merry Bullock, Beate Sodian, Susanne Koerber, "Doing experiments and understanding science: Development of scientific reasoning from childhood to adulthood", in: Wolfgang Schneider, Merry Bullock, *Human development from early childhood to early adulthood: Findings from a 20 year longitudinal study*, New York 2009, pp. 173–197.

28 Reiven Babai, Tamar Levit-Dori, "Several CASE lessons can improve students' control of variables reasoning scheme ability", *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 2009, vol. 18, pp. 429–446; Yuriy V. Karpov, *The Neo-Vygotskian approach to child* development, New York 2005.

29 Paul A. Klaczynski, David H. Gordon, "Self-serving influences on adolescents' evaluations of belief-relevant evidence", *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 1996, vol. 62, issue 3, pp. 317–339; Paul A. Klaczynski, David H. Gordon, "Everyday statistical reasoning during adolescence and young adulthood: Motivational, general ability, and developmental influences", *Child Development* 1996, vol. 67, issue 6, pp. 2873–2891;

taking other people's perspectives or views, especially if they are different from their own. As they grow up, teenagers become increasingly capable of decontextualization, which consists in separating prior knowledge from the demands of the current task[30]. Decontextualization increases the likelihood that the person will logically analyse the problem rather than rely on intuition and that they will not be misled by prior knowledge.

Formal operational thinking – including the ability to apply logical reasoning to issues that one does not know from personal experience – contributes to other changes taking place in adolescence: to the development of a sense of identity, thinking in more complex ways about moral issues, and – with time – better understanding of other people. Progress in cognitive development also provides part of the foundation for progress in many other areas of development, including the comprehension of jokes, metaphors, and irony.

In late adolescence, the use of cognitive strategies in the process of learning and acquiring new skills becomes much more effective. There are also improvements in metamemory and metacognition – knowledge about one's cognitive processes and one's memory and learning strategies. Teenagers can now better adjust the learning strategies they know for the purposes and demands of a given task; for example, they adjust an appropriate

Deanna Kuhn, "Science as argument: Implications for teaching and learning scientific thinking", *Science Education* 1993, vol. 77, issue 3, pp. 319–337.

30 Deanna Kuhn, Sam Franklin, "The second decade: What develops and how", in: William Damon, Richard M. Lerner, Deanna Kuhn, Robert S. Siegler, H*andbook of child psychology*, New York 2006, pp. 953–993; Keith E. Stanovich, Richard F. West, "Reasoning independently of prior belief and individual differences in actively open-minded thinking", *Journal of Educational Psychology* 1997, vol. 89, issue 2, pp. 342–357.

reading strategy for a purpose that may consist in memorizing or recognizing information, and they realize when they do not understand something[31]. Approximately 80% of sixteen-year-olds report that they monitor their memory and learning strategies. But only 50–60% report that they think ahead to prepare an effective plan for a difficult task or think back after completing the task to evaluate what worked well and what did not[32]. Executive functions continue to develop, such as planning, monitoring, and organizing, which are necessary for intentionally taking on and engaging in various tasks and actions and for the realization of goals. The development of strategies, knowledge, and metacognition is also of importance for the improvement of everyday problem-solving skills that takes place in adolescence. Teenagers improve their information processing skills and can consciously and spontaneously use them in a variety of tasks.

Contemporary theories concerning the development of thinking draw attention to the fact that the globalized reality and the possibility of contact with diverse but equally valuable forms and models of social, religious, intimate, family, and material life, different political and scientific forms, etc. can contribute to the development of relativistic thinking[33]. Adolescence is a time of developing epistemic beliefs, namely reflections on thinking and the sources of knowledge. The research of various psychologists shows that the development of relativistic thinking goes

31 Linda Baker, Ann L. Brown, "Metacognitive skills and reading", in: P. David Pearson, Rebecca Barr, Michael L. Kamil, Peter B. Mosenthal, *Handbook of reading research*, New York 1984, pp. 353–394.

32 Bruno Leutwyler, "Metacognitive learning strategies: Differential development patterns in high school", *Metacognition and Learning* 2009, vol. 4, issue 2, pp. 111–123.

33 Anna Oleszkowicz, Alicja Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania. Zmiany rozwojowe w dobie globalizacji*, Warsaw 2013.

through successive stages, from the absolutist attitude (the belief that every issue can be resolved in many different ways, but there is only one objectively correct solution), through the subjectivist one (the belief that people's experiences are subjective by nature, which implies the equal legitimacy of all options), to the evaluative position (the awareness of the relativity of knowledge and values combined with the choice of one point of view).

According to Michael Chandler, these processes are linked with developmental changes regarding attitude to knowledge[34]. The dominant attitude in childhood is logical absolutism – the belief that there is one true knowledge, based on full accord with facts. Adolescents exhibit a general Cartesian anxiety, manifesting itself in questioning the foundations of their current thinking about knowledge and the world. Teenagers start to notice contradictions in the opinions of authorities and begin to understand that facts are created, that there is no absolute truth, and that objective criteria for determining the truthfulness of statements do not exist. This attitude may be related to the identity crisis and youthful rebellion, manifesting itself in opposing and challenging the opinions expressed by parents, teachers, politicians, scholars, etc. In Chandler's opinion, the most mature stage in the development of human attitude to knowledge is post-sceptical rationalism, which consists in the belief that, even though there is no one absolute truth, and even though knowledge is constructed, there is shared experience transmitted through culture and language, which contributes to the intersubjectivity of knowledge and its social acquisition. According to a different scholar,

34 Michael J. Chandler, Michael Boyes, Lorraine Ball, "Relativism and stations of epistemic doubt", *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 1990, vol. 50, issue 3, pp. 370–395.

David Moshman[35], adolescents oscillate between scepticism (subjective relativism – the belief that it is impossible to get to know anything with absolute certainty) and dogmatism (absolutism, radical objectivism – the recognition of the unquestionable authority of one absolute knowledge, option, and truth).

These authors' research makes it possible to account for teenagers' observable feeling of being lost and their uncertainty about beliefs, views, and knowledge, which motivate some of them to look for information, verify it, and reflect on it, while in others they induce anxiety and can lead to withdrawal and to the avoidance of confrontation and reflection. In the contemporary world, these difficulties can be intensified by the presence of diverse opinions and views (frequently contradictory and mutually exclusive), fake news, and the lack of clear authorities. Difficulty in accepting anxiety, uneasiness, and uncertainty can lead to an attitude of dogmatism and result in groups of adolescents radicalizing.

How does this translate into everyday life? At this stage, teenagers become increasingly aware of their own cognitive processes – they know, for instance, how they assimilate information, what disturbs their learning, what helps them learn, and where they derive knowledge from. They also understand that not everyone thinks the same – for example, they can infer where someone's views different from their own came from. Teenagers can also apply logical reasoning when looking for answers to the dilemmas – encountered in their life or hypothetical – concerning various social or moral situations.

35 David Moshman, *Adolescent rationality and development: Cognition, morality, and identity*, New York 2011.

By now, moreover, adolescents understand the difference between facts and opinions and reflect on them. As a result, they discover that authorities – including parents – are not always right. On the one hand, this can lead them to broaden their knowledge, seek different perspectives, and practice discussion, but, on the other, it carries a risk of rejecting everything as subjective opinion and treating all sources of information (both science and fake news spread on the Internet) as equal. Importantly, it happens that teenagers' antidote to the sense of uncertainty caused by the lack of authorities and truths consists in turning to radical groups, which describe reality in black-and-white terms and give unambiguous answers to questions. This makes it particularly important to accompany young people in discovering the diversity and nuances in the surrounding world and to practice critical thinking.

Teenagers gradually attain a kind of balance of extreme attitudes and reach the stage of post-sceptical rationalism (also referred to as contextual relativism or integrated attitude). At this stage of metaknowledge development, a person already has an established belief that, even if there are many options, the choice between them is not merely a matter of personal/subjective preferences, since methods of verification are available that are based on common experience or reasoning. What fosters the development of metaknowledge at this stage and contributes to building epistemic attitudes is the development of critical thinking; it may also be related to different skills making up social intelligence, namely empathy, the ability to understand other people's perspectives, and theory of mind.

Most researchers define critical thinking by referring to various cognitive skills making up what is called scientific thinking – skills such as analysing arguments, distinguishing facts from opinions, or deductive

and inductive reasoning[36]. However, apart from certain cognitive skills, critical thinking comprises dispositions that can be perceived as attitudes manifesting themselves in openness inquisitiveness, flexibility, tendency to look for explanations, and willingness to take different points of view[37].

With the development of representation and metarepresentation,[38] children and then teenagers can analyse and evaluate also their own knowledge and various cognitive processes in an increasingly conscious manner[39]. In her developmental model of critical thinking, Deanna Kuhn defines it precisely as a set of metacognitive skills, such as metacognitive knowledge (reflection on what one knows and on how this knowledge is supported), metastrategic knowledge (which enables the individual to monitor the contents of their thoughts and understand the emergence of other people's thoughts), and epistemological thinking (understanding the relationship between the objectively existing reality and

36 Corinne Zimmerman, "The development of scientific thinking skills in elementary and middle school", *Developmental Review* 2007, vol. 27, issue 2, pp. 172–223; Emily Lai, "Critical thinking: A literature review", *Pearson's Research Reports* 2011, vol. 6, pp. 40–41; Carlo Magno, "The role of metacognitive skills in developing critical thinking", *Metacognition and Learning* 2010, vol. 5, issue 2, pp. 137–156; Walter Schroyens, "Review of knowledge and thought: An introduction to critical thinking", *Experimental Psychology* 2005, vol. 52, issue 2, pp. 163–164.

37 Peter Facione, "Critical thinking: A statement of expert consensus for purposes of educational assessment and instruction", *The Delphi Report* 1990; Emily Lai, "*Critical thinking: A literature review", Pearson's Research Reports* 2011, vol. 6, pp. 40–41.

38 Josef Perner, *Understanding the representational mind*, Cambridge 1991.

39 Bradford H. Pillow, "Development of children's understanding of cognitive activities", *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 2008, vol. 16, issue 4, pp. 297–321.

beliefs about it)[40]. In their model of scientific thinking known as *scientific discovery as dual search* (SDDS), Zimmerman and Klahr assume that the processes of inquiry and conceptual change require three cognitive elements: formulating and refining hypotheses (*hypothesis space search*), research skills (*experiment space search*), and evidence evaluation[41]. Importantly, these three processes relate to the five main scientific practices: asking questions, building and using models, planning and conducting research, analysing and interpreting data/evidence, and constructing explanations.

Likewise, Kuhn distinguishes four main phases of scientific thinking, namely inquiry, analysis, inference, and argument[42]. All these phases of scientific thinking can be applied to every kind of knowledge, including knowledge about the social world, not only to knowledge in the domain of science. Therefore, generally, people can think scientifically or critically not only about climate, evolution, astronomy, and diseases but also about economics, politics, education, and social problems. Kuhn distinguishes six elements of critical thinking:

1. the ability to argue,
2. the ability to coordinate theory (explanations) and facts (evidence),
3. the tendency to ask questions,
4. selective trust or scepticism / source-directed vigilance,

40 Deanna Kuhn, "A developmental model of critical thinking", *Educational Researcher* 1999, vol. 28, issue 2, pp. 16–46.

41 Corinne Zimmerman, David Klahr, *Development of scientific thinking*, New York 2023 (*Stevens' Handbook of Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience*).

42 Deanna Kuhn, "Reasoning", in: *The Oxford handbook of developmental psychology*, vol. 1*: Body and mind*, ed. Philip David Zelazo, New York 2013, pp. 744–764.

5. counterfactual reasoning,
6. attitudes to knowledge, learning, and teaching[43].

In other words, critical thinking refers to certain types of reasoning skills or abilities that combine information analysis and assessment, not always taking account of scientific facts or scientific theories – but, in a broader sense, applying also to all kinds of explorations and explanations[44]. It is in adolescence that this way of thinking develops, but due to certain limitations characteristic of this stage, such as the previously discussed egocentrism, teenagers still find it difficult to analyse the available information and facts logically and rationally.

In their monograph titled *Children's questions: A mechanism for cognitive development*, Chouinard, Harris, and Maratsos report research studies on the information requesting mechanism (IRM) and conclude that the skill of asking questions – requesting information – is a cognitive development mechanism[45]. In many novel or problematic situations, children may have gaps in their knowledge; they may also encounter ambiguity or incoherence. When solving problems, children who have the skill of asking questions can obtain precisely the information they need at a given moment. Readiness to question one's own knowledge, analysing its sources, and reacting with questions to contradictions or inconsistencies between current and newly acquired knowledge are significant elements in the development of critical

43 Ibid.

44 Cristine H. Legare, "The contributions of explanation and exploration to children's scientific reasoning", Child Development Perspectives 2014, vol. 8, pp. 101–106.

45 Michelle M. Chouinard, P. L. Harris, Michael P. Maratsos, "Children's questions: A mechanism for cognitive development", *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 2007, vol. 72, issue 1.

thinking that can be observed already in children at the beginning of their schooling and that continue to develop in adolescence.

According to the authors of the *Report on the State of Education 2010,* "Polish pupils are good mainly at algorithmic and simple tasks, but compared to their peers in different countries they are relatively less often able to cope with unfamiliar or vague situations that require initiative and independent reasoning – critical and creative thinking"[46]. Although critical thinking is an important aim of education included in the core curriculum, the analysis presented by the authors of the report reveals that this aim is not pursued to a sufficient degree in the Polish school.

What does this mean in practice? With time, teenagers learn to go beyond their "bubble" and develop full openness to other perspectives and views. A condition for this change is the development of the crucial ability of critical thinking, which, apart from logical reasoning, includes skills such as curiosity, asking questions, and formulating arguments. One must remember, however, that this is a process – teenagers are still focused on themselves and believe that their experiences are exceptional (which has been mentioned earlier); they are still only acquiring these skills. This means they need a friendly space to practice them, and they also need support. Classes devoted to art can be precisely this kind of space. That is where teenagers can encounter a variety of perspectives and views, exchange them freely, ask questions, and stimulate the development of critical and creative thinking.

[46] Translated from: *Raport o stanie edukacji 2010. Społeczeństwo w drodze do wiedzy*, Educational Research Institute, Warsaw 2011, p. 10; http://eduentuzjasci.pl/badanie/126-informacje/artykul/233-raport-o-stanie-edukacji-2010.html (accessed 11.04.2023).

Personality development

When describing themselves, teenagers increasingly refer to their psychological characteristics, personality traits, and stable dispositions, and their self-descriptions are increasingly consistent. Their skills of using mental vocabulary and abstract concepts to describe themselves and others improve. Additionally, adolescents' self-evaluation is more diversified than children's; they can evaluate themselves in different contexts and with regard to different areas of functioning. Based on comparisons with others, the assessment of successes and failures, feedback from others, and their own reflection on the feedback received, teenagers build their self-esteem. Characteristically, adolescence is marked by an observable decrease in self-esteem compared to the earlier developmental stage. Adolescents become more competent and realistically evaluate their strong and weak points[47], but they may temporarily become unsure of themselves when they move from primary to secondary school or to college[48].

Identity formation takes much time and is an important developmental challenge in early and, above all, late adolescence. Referring to the previously discussed stages of identity formation distinguished by Marcia, one can say that many young people move from the identity diffusion status to the identity moratorium (exploration) status and then achieve a sense of

47 Janis E. Jacobs, Stephanie Lanza, Wayne D. Osgood, Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Allan Wigfield, "Changes in children's self-competence and values: Gender and domain differences across grades one through twelve", *Child Development* 2002, vol. 73, pp. 509–527; Richard W. Robins, Kali H. Trzesniewski, Jessica L. Tracy, Samuel D. Gosling, Jeff Potter, "Global self-esteem across the life span", *Psychology and Aging* 2002, vol. 17, issue 3, pp. 423–434.

48 David A. Cole, Scott E. Maxwell, Joan M. Martin, Lachlan G. Peeke, A. D. Seroczynski, Jane M. Tram, "The development of multiple domains of child and adolescent self-concept: A cohort sequential longitudinal design", *Child Development* 2001, vol. 72, pp. 1723–1746.

their own identity towards the end of late adolescence or during transition to adulthood. But this is by no means the end of the identity formation process. Some adults remain in the moratorium phase for years; others reopen the question "Who am I?" and transform moratorium identity into the status of identity achievement[49]. Even in late adulthood some individuals rebuild and strengthen their sense of identity[50].

A teenager's progress in identity achievement in different domains is the outcome of at least five factors:

1. cognitive development,
2. personality,
3. relations with parents,
4. exploration opportunities,
5. the cultural context.

Cognitive development enables teenagers to imagine and contemplate possible future identities. Those teenagers who have reached an appropriate level of formal operational thinking think in a complex and abstract way, are focused on themselves, and actively seek relevant information, and when faced with decisions they are more likely to address and solve identity problems than their less cognitively advanced peers[51]. Another sig-

49 Kristine Anthis, Joseph C. LaVoie, "Readiness to change: A longitudinal study of changes in adult identity", *Journal of Research in Personality* 2006, vol. 40, issue 2, pp. 209–219; Jane Kroger, *Identity development: Adolescence through adulthood*, Thousand Oaks 2007.

50 Alyssa N. Zucker, Joan M. Ostrove, Abigail J. Stewart, "College-educated women's personality development in adulthood: Perceptions and age differences", *Psychology and Aging* 2002, vol. 17, issue 2, pp. 236–244.

51 Michael D. Berzonsky, Linda S. Kuk, "Identity status, identity processing style, and the transition to university", *Journal of Adolescent Research* 2000, vol. 15, issue 1, pp. 81–98;

nificant factor is individual personality traits. It turns out that adolescents with traits such as low neuroticism, high openness to experience, and high conscientiousness more often reach the status of identity achievement[52]. This means they are more emotionally stable, curious about themselves, other people, and the surrounding world, and more responsible.

Importantly, teenagers' relations with parents impact their progress in identity formation[53]. The adolescents who are neglected or rejected by their parents and who are emotionally distanced from them get stuck in the identity diffusion status more often than teenagers from the remaining categories. On the one hand, this group may find it difficult to develop their identity because they lack opportunities to juxtapose their feelings and experiences with the attitudes of respected parents, and because they have no chance to acquire some desirable parental characteristics. On the other hand, teenagers in the stage of identity foreclosure seem to be very close to their parents, who are loving but at the same time overprotective and overcontrolling. Because teenagers with foreclosure identity have few opportunities to make independent decisions, they may never question parental authority and may not feel the need to construct a distinct identity of their own. For comparison, students classified under identity moratorium and achievement statuses usually seem to have a sense of security at

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Alan S. Waterman, "Identity as an aspect of optimal psychological functioning", in: Gerald R. Adams, Thomas P. Gullotta, Raymond Montemayor, *Adolescent identity formation*, Michigan 1992, pp. 50–72.

52 Daniel J. Ozer, Verónica Benet-Martínez, "Personality and the prediction of consequential outcomes", *Annual Review of Psychology* 2006, vol. 57, pp. 401–421.

53 Vignoli Emmanuelle, "Inter-relationships among attachment to mother and father, self-esteem, and career indecision", *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 2009, vol. 75, pp. 91–99; Jane Kroger, "Identity development", op. cit.; Alan S. Waterman, "Identity as an aspect of optimal psychological functioning", op. cit.

home, combined with encouragement of autonomy[54]. In family conversations, these teenagers experience not only a sense of closeness and mutual respect but also occasions when they can disagree with their parents[55].

Exploration opportunities are the fourth factor influencing identity formation. For instance, teenagers who, in successive stages of development and in different environments (home; school; peer group), encounter various ideas and are encouraged to solve problems on their own are provided with a certain kind of moratorium with freedom to discover, which Erikson believes to be indispensable for identity formation[56]. Finally, identity development is influenced by the wider cultural context. The view that adolescents should form their identity after carefully exploring many options may be characteristic of modern industrialized Western societies[57]. As in the case of teenagers in earlier epochs, in many traditional societies today young people simply adopt the adult roles available in their culture without looking inside themselves too much or experimenting. For numerous teenagers in traditional societies, foreclosure identity status may be the most adaptive path to adulthood[58]. The identity achievement status, which seems to be more adaptive in Western societies, is marked by psychological

54 Jane Kroger, "Identity development", op. cit.

55 Harold D. Grotevant, Catherine R. Cooper, "Individuation in family relationships: A perspective on individual differences in the development of identity and role-taking skill in adolescence", *Human Development* 1986, vol. 29, issue 2, pp. 82–100.

56 Jane Kroger, "Identity development", op. cit.

57 James E. Côté, Charles Levine, "*A critical examination of the ego identity status paradigm*", *Developmental Review* 1988, vol. 8, issue 2, pp. 147–184; Hanoch Flum, David L. Blustein, "Reinvigorating the study of vocational exploration: A framework for research", *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 2000, vol. 56, issue 3, pp. 380–404.

58 James E. Côté, Charles Levine, "A critical examination of the ego identity status paradigm", op cit.

well-being and high self-esteem, complex thinking about moral issues, and a desire for acceptance from and cooperation with other people[59].

What does this mean in practice? Identity formation is a natural process in adolescence; however, its course largely depends not only on the teenager's individual characteristics but also on the characteristics of the external environment – family relations as well as the possibilities of exploring the world and the culture in which a particular person functions. The space of exploration can effectively be expanded by classes devoted to art – by inspiring, charting new directions for exploration, or asking questions about the models offered by our culture.

Let us also remember that identity formation does not come to an end with the beginning of adulthood. One can return to it, and the stages of this process may alternate. There is no one desirable scenario here.

With the development of identity, adolescents develop a worldview, which is an individual's way of interpreting the world based on their cultural and personal experiences and based on individual traits and needs. That worldview reflects the individual's knowledge, views, beliefs, and feelings[60] and relates to an individual system of values. It is also evaluative, as it enables evaluation of the world's phenomena and one's own place in the world from the point of view of the criteria the person has adopted[61].

59 Jane Kroger, "Identity development", op. cit.; Alan S. Waterman, "Identity as an aspect of optimal psychological functioning", op. cit.

60 Jan Cieciuch, *Relacje między wartościami a przekonaniami światopoglądowymi w okresie dorastania,* Warsaw 2007.

61 Anna Oleszkowicz, Alicja Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania*, op. cit.

According to Jan Cieciuch,[62] a worldview is a two-level structure, composed of the precognitive and cognitive structures. The precognitive structure is related to the individual's tendency, rooted in environmental and personality factors, to prefer specific views and conceptions of the world and often remains outside consciousness. The cognitive structure is the conscious content of the worldview, comprising the most general cognitive representations and worldview beliefs. A characteristic feature of the cognitive structure is also the belief in the veracity of one's views. Initially, adolescents' worldviews are marked by considerable radicalism and an unquestioned conviction that one is right, which is sometimes helpful in coping with an identity crisis[63]. An important element of building a worldview, visible especially in adolescence, is the two-dimensionality of the idea of the world constructed at that time, with the real and ideal dimensions.

Based on the analysis of the content aspect of worldview, several categories can be distinguished:

1. views concerning the origin of the world and the human being (existence vs. non-existence of God);
2. views on the forces governing the world and the human being;
3. views on whether the world is just (existential optimism and internal locus of control vs. pessimism and external locus of control);

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62 Jan Cieciuch, "Czym jest światopogląd? Filozoficzny kontekst psychologicznego pojęcia", *Psychologia Rozwojowa* 2005, vol. 10, issue 2, pp. 147–159.

63 Anna Oleszkowicz, Alicja Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania*, op. cit.

4. views on whether man is rational, honest, and trustworthy (faith vs. lack of faith in man);

5. views on the role of social groups and individuals in history and on the primacy of individual interests over those of the community (individualism vs. collectivism)[64].

In his research, Jan Cieciuch distinguished worldview beliefs relating to the following content categories:

1. ontological beliefs (concerning the existence of the supernatural world, naturalism, and free will);

2. epistemological beliefs (concerning the nature of cognition, the problem of truth, and the object of cognition);

3. axiological beliefs (relating to human nature, the origin of values, and the evaluation of behaviours and actions);

4. sociological beliefs (evaluation of democracy, basic political orientation, beliefs concerning the future of the world);

5. theological beliefs (concerning the existence of God, the origin of man, and life after death)[65].

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64 Tadeusz Mądrzycki, *Osobowość jako system tworzący i realizujący plany*, Gdańsk 2002.

65 Jan Cieciuch, "*Badanie przekonań światopoglądowych – prezentacja autorskiej techniki "Moje poglądy na świat"*, *Psychologia Rozwojowa* 2004, vol. 9, issue 1, pp. 87–104; idem, *Relacje między wartościami a przekonaniami*, op. cit.; idem, *Kształtowanie się systemu wartości od dzieciństwa do wczesnej dorosłości*, Warsaw 2013.

Accordingly, adolescents look for answers to existential questions: Where do we come from? Where are we heading? What mechanisms govern the world? What can we do for the world and what can it do for us? Answers to these questions are suggested to teenagers by culture through language, religion, ideologies, or values promoted in a given community. The contemporary world abounds in such views and proposed answers; it is also marked by a lack of clear criteria for choosing among them, which results in uncertainty about their validity and may hinder worldview development in adolescents. An important role in reducing uncertainty and anxiety in teenagers' life is played by authorities and mentors. Today, however, a considerable decrease in the significance of authorities is observed, with their place being often taken by idols or celebrities.

A significant element of worldview is ideology, defined as a system of views, ideas, and political social, legal, ethical, religious, and philosophical concepts held by a person or group[66]. Ideology plays a fundamental role in adolescence because supporting a certain ideological solution means not only a possibility of building one's identification in the socio-religious domain but also a chance to win recognition from the group or significant others, which is an important element of the developing identity[67].

What is also significant for the development of worldview is the system of values adopted by the young person, providing categories for describing and evaluating the world; this is noticeable, among other situations, in attempts at creating an ideal vision of the world. A phenomenon characteristic of adolescents is youthful idealism, namely a worldview concerning what the world should be like, and judgements and beliefs about

66 Jan Tokarski, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, Warsaw 1980.

67 Anna Oleszkowicz, Alicja Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania*, op. cit.

the world are strongly saturated by emotions and evaluations. According to Stefan Szuman, youthful idealism is characterized by high emotional intensity, a subjective component (related to the person's needs), a dream component embodied in a vision of a perfect world, and a sense of potential power[68]. Three phases can be distinguished in the development of idealism:

1. anticipatory idealism – characteristic of teenagers aged 12–14 years, it has the highest level of dreams, expectations of good, and faith in a perfect world; it is based on dreams and imagination and (to a smaller degree) on real experience;

2. compensatory idealism – emerges as a result of confronting one's dreams and visions of a perfect world with real experiences; it is connected with a desire to escape from reality; a function of this kind of idealism is to protect the individual against pessimism; it also induces a desire for change and repair activities, which can find expression in rebellion, protest, and criticism of what young people judge as wrong;

3. normative (practical) idealism – the desire to mend the world is directed to realistic issues.

Other studies revealed that secondary school students were predominantly characterized by normative idealism, realizing its advantages in the form of the strength it gave for action and the possibility of setting goals[69]. What they mentioned as negative outcomes of idealism was the experience of dilemmas and uncertainty, being out of touch with reality,

68 Stefan Szuman, Józef Pieter, Henryk Weryński, *Psychologia światopoglądu młodzieży*, Lwów-Warsaw 1933.

69 Cf. Antonina Gurycka, *Światopogląd młodzieży*, Warsaw 1991.

and fanaticism. Secondary school students more often adhered to idealism in love and were inclined to treat life as an opportunity for self-realization – the fulfilment of their potential – rather than see it in terms of the effort of existence and struggle for survival.

Research conducted in different periods show that certain changes are taking place in youthful idealism that are related to civilizational and socio-cultural changes. According to contemporary scholars, adolescents today often adopt an attitude of practicalism, trying to find the kind of place in the world that will allow them to derive various goods and profitable offers from the world[70]. On the other hand, however, many studies indicate that idealism continues to be present among adolescents and has been merging with practicalism rather than vanishing altogether. A good example is youthful altruistic rebellion, which means commitment to the defence of other people's rights and interests even despite the negative consequences this may bring about[71]. Situations provoking this type of rebellion include those in which someone experiences intolerance, injustice, incompetence, hypocrisy in human relations, arrogance, deception in the media, terrorism, war, or vandalism[72].

Civilizational and socio-cultural development are accompanied by changes young people's system of values. Research by Krystyna Szafraniec which compared the values cherished by secondary school students in 1976 and 2007 showed that what contemporary adolescents valued the most was

70 Krystyna Szafraniec, *Młodzi 2011*, Warsaw 2011; Anna Oleszkowicz, Alicja Senejko, *Psychologia dorastania*, op. cit.

71 Anna Oleszkowicz, *Bunt młodzieńczy. Uwarunkowania. Formy. Skutki*, Warsaw 2006.

72 Eadem, "Theoretical and empirical aspects of the altruistic rebellion in adolescence", *Polish Psychological Bulletin* 2005, vol. 36, issue 3, 149–155.

successful family life, friendship, an interesting job, prestige and respect, being useful, good education, and a thrilling life. Compared to the adolescents of the 1970s, the only stable value is family. The values important for young people are related to their position in the world (education, prestige), social relations (family, friendship), better standards of living (an interesting job), and consumerist or hedonistic trends (a thrilling life)[73].

The system of values is clearly linked with the social group a teenager belongs to. In her research, Mirosława Czerniawska found a relationship between a person's system of values and youth culture ideology they subscribed to[74]. Participants in that research were members of three subcultures: skinheads, punks, and Rastafarians. For skinheads, the central value was national security, which is related to their nationalist ideology. The most important values for punks were freedom and a thrilling life. Members of the third subculture – Rastafarians – were characterized by a belief in a positive transformation of the world, associated with pacifism and a creative model of self-fulfilment.

How does this translate into everyday life? It is understandable that worldview and ideology are very important elements in teenagers' lives, because they are related both to identity formation, crucial at this stage of life, and to the need for acceptance and belonging to a group, which is the basic need in this period. The role of adults – let us repeat – is to show the diversity of groups and views and certain universal values, so that radical groups do not seem to be the most attractive option.

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73 Jan Cieciuch, *Relacje między wartościami a przekonaniami*, op. cit.

74 Mirosława Czerniawska, "System wartości w subkulturach młodzieżowych (na przykładzie skinów, punków i rastamanów)", *Edukacja* 2000, vol. 4, pp. 55–64.

Teenagers' youthful idealism and faith in the possibility of mending the world allows them to participate in various organizations and social movements with extraordinary dedication and to raise issues that adults consider to be too idealistic or infeasible. What can serve as an example is the activity of the Extinction Rebellion movement or some activities for the LGBTQ+ community. Another form of support for teenagers in this period is adults' openness to idealistic activism, which can lead to various social changes.

Creativity development

Regarding the development of creativity, there are visible changes associated with the increasingly conscious choice of diverse means of expression in accordance with one's own preferences and interests. According to Szuman, older teenagers enter the adult art stage[75]. In the intellectual realism phase, the contents of drawings are often based on a direct model. There is also an observable return to spontaneous intellectual contents – derived from imagination, involving the use of abstract forms and the creation of personal symbols. The proportions and shapes presented are realistic, though there appear conscious attempts at deformation, transformation, or modification and personal interpretation. Compositions are multi-layered and consist of multiple elements. The colours used are local and frequently also abstract.

The development of abstract thinking is linked with the development of symbolic thinking and metaphorical self-expression, also in literary creativity. Teenagers are increasingly skilful in discerning the ambiguity of symbols and utterances and in perceiving their non-literal contents. In the domain of

75 Stefan Szuman, *Sztuka dziecka*, op. cit.

language, this manifests itself in the use of various poetic or stylistic devices; it is also visible in experimenting and in creating new words and expressions.

What is worth remembering when working with young people?

An atmosphere of acceptance

Teenagers may have difficulty with openness and commitment to the activities they engage in if they do not feel secure enough in a given group to express their opinions and views. Their desire to gain acceptance from the group can be a cause of rejection anxiety and increase conformism. On the other hand, the opportunity to challenge their own views and beliefs with their peers' perspectives has a stimulating effect on teenagers' cognitive and personality development. It is necessary, however, to see to the integration of the group if its members have not known one another before and to set and adhere to clear rules. Here are a few practical tips:

1. Teenagers should be assured that different answers, comments, and opinions are valid and acceptable, and that various interpretations of works, stimuli, and situations are possible. Let us stress that diverse ways of seeing a given problem or subject enrich discussion and can inspire or introduce a new perspective.

2. At the beginning, the person conducting the class may make a "contract" with students, giving them the possibility of speaking out freely, but at the same time setting the limits for expressing opinions – demanding respectful treatment of others and allowing exclusively constructive criticism.

3. What is important is a non-judgemental attitude on the teacher's part and the encouragement of such an attitude towards other participants in the class.

4. Stimulation and the overcoming of conformism can be achieved by suggesting "provocative" interpretations and untypical ways of solving problems, which may prompt the group to engage in discussion and present nonconformist opinions and views.

5. It is worth accepting both refusal and willingness to engage in a given activity or interaction in front of the group. Refusal or withdrawal does not stem from teenagers' defiant approach and may be an expression of:

- an increased fear of being judged by peers,
- a sense of incompetence and a distrust of their abilities,
- lack of self-confidence regarding their body and appearance (for example, during workshops using movement, dance, or pantomime),
- a feeling of rejection by the group or a sense of being different/alienated, and so on.

6. Let us avoid judging and comparing. Instead, let us show interest, emphasize the strong points, and appreciate interesting solutions. Let us show acceptance of difficulties and problems and encourage engagement in solving them together and the use of one another's help.

Motivation

An important element that impacts processing, memorizing, presenting, and reflecting on information is emotional and motivational factors. On

the one hand, they support cognitive processes, but on the other, they can also hinder them if the level of emotions and engagement is too low or too high. According to the Yerkes–Dodson law, effective task performance and cognitive engagement are possible during optimal psycho-physiological arousal[76]. If stimulation is too low or too high, the effectiveness of work considerably decreases. Contemporary self-regulation theories also underscore the significance of emotional and motivational factors for effective functioning, both cognitive and social. According to Stuart Shanker's Self-Reg theory, it can be assumed that the limited pool of resources we have is divided between five domains vital to our functioning[77]. Shanker identifies these domains as follows: the biological domain, the emotion domain, the cognitive domain, the social domain, and the pro-social domain (connected with relating to the people we have contact with – understanding their perspective, recognizing their intentions, and noticing their feelings). Engaging our resources in one of these domains may result in there not being enough of them for performing tasks or effective functioning in a different domain. For instance, in a situation of excessive psychological arousal, teenagers may engage multiple resources and self-regulation strategies to cope with the arousal (for example, not to flare up in anger or burst into tears in the presence of others) and may not have sufficient resources left to process information effectively.

The following can contribute to optimizing arousal and motivate teenagers to engage in classes:

76 See: Wiesław Łukaszewski, Dariusz Doliński, "Mechanizmy leżące u podstaw motywacji", in: *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki*, vol. 2, ed. Jan Strelau, Gdańsk 2000, pp. 441–468.

77 Stuart Shanker, Teresa Barker, *Self-reg. Jak pomóc dziecku (i sobie) nie dać się stresowi i żyć pełnią możliwości*, trans. Natalia Fedan, Warsaw 2016.

1. Specifying the aim of the classes, showing what purpose they are meant to serve and what skills, abilities or knowledge they can develop or expand;

2. Appealing to teenagers' interests; Deciding on the subjects of classes together with the students, if possible;

3. Designing tasks based on cooperation and active forms of education;

4. Ensuring breaks during longer classes;

5. Alternating diverse forms of activity (between those requiring concentration, listening, cognitive engagement, or sitting and "freer" ones involving movement, creativity, imagination, and different senses);

6. Using project-based learning, whose outcome will be the creation of a work or product (such as a video, sculpture, text, photograph, presentation, choreographic routine, commercial, etc.);

7. Using curiosities, anecdotes, or information about an artist's life or significant though little-known socio-historical topics when presenting information and transmitting knowledge;

8. Encouraging individual or group efforts to look for information, answers to questions, or explanations of an issue;

9. Arranging situations that enable experiential learning. According to David Kolb, learning is a process in which consecutive stages can be distinguished:

- CONCRETE EXPERIENCE – this can be participation in a debate or workshop, acting out roles, carrying out experiments, etc.;
- REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION – talking to participants about the experience they had and about their feelings, observations, and associations. Everyone should be encouraged to speak and share their reflections. It is worth asking questions directing participants' attention to different aspects of experience: "What happened at the beginning?"; "What did you feel at the time?"; "Did your feelings change? At which moment?"; "Did that evoke any associations?". It is possible to provide a model for sharing reflections by speaking about one's own impressions and observations;
- ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION – in this stage, conclusions are drawn from the experience and reflection on it. Generalizations are pursued and patterns are sought;
- ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION – looking for possible situations in which the acquired knowledge could be applied, for example in everyday life[78];

10. Using various forms of experiential learning: problem-based learning, learning through exploration/experimentation, games and simulations, case study, and discussion.

Appealing to teenagers' interests and everyday experiences

As we already know, adolescence is a time of strong focus on personal experiences and perceptions and a time of identity formation. It is also

78 David A. Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, New Jersey 1984.

a time of creativity development and overcoming patterns. This makes it crucial – and creative – when conducting classes for adolescents to appeal to their experiences and interests, listen to their suggestions, and consider their proposals.

Younger teenagers are focused on changes associated with puberty, the body, and seeking a peer group in which they will be accepted. They seek information about themselves and search for their own identity. An important element of interest related to identity development is sexuality and gender identity.

With time, young people also become increasingly interested in social, climate, political, and cultural issues. They intentionally search for information concerning a variety of areas and issues and engage in social campaigns and other activities. Because emotional involvement is often present, it is important to remind participants about the diversity of perspectives and respect for other views.

When constructing a lesson or workshop scenario, it is worth reflecting on how what we wish to teach is related to teenagers' experiences. Here is what one should bear in mind:

1. Teenagers are experts on themselves, which is why they should be asked what they would like to talk about and what subject of a lesson or workshop would be interesting to them.

2. Interests, current "hot topics," and popular contents change quickly.

3. Topics may evoke a variety of emotions and be linked with different views.

4. It is worth encouraging teenagers to look out for works of art, meanings, and symbols that have triggered various emotions in them – from positive to negative ones, encouraging reflection on their significance and on the associations with the experiences and events in teenagers' lives that they evoke.

5. Teenagers should be encouraged to look for links between the significance of various works within the socio-cultural context of their times and the possible reference to the present day and to current issues; they should be encouraged to look for timeless meanings, symbols, and motifs.

Cooperation

Teenagers already have the skills that allow them to effectively engage in cooperation, such as taking other people's perspective, participating in dialogue, negotiating compromises, coordinating their actions with those of other group members, striving to achieve the goal together, planning, and monitoring their activities. They can also cope in situations of pressure stemming from competition. They gladly engage in team games. They can set common rules and treat them as a form of social contract. A form of activity adding variety to workshops can be field or narrative games. They allow students to freely explore the surroundings, search for information on their own, analyse it, look for connections, or draw conclusions. It is essential that the tasks performed during a game have a clear purpose – such as solving a riddle. Field games can be narrative RPGS (role-playing games), in which participants play specified roles, have defined characteristics, and do tasks in accordance with the plot of the game, striving to achieve the main goal. Teenagers may more gladly engage in this kind of games due to their interest in various computer games. The

varied form of lessons can also influence students' motivation to engage in them.

Imagination

Imagination is an excellent tool to use when working with young people. Encouraging them to imagine various contents, such as the meaning of newly learnt concepts, information, facts, or events, is an effective way of improving the effectiveness of learning and remembering. Personal representations are remembered better than, for example, presenting ready-made illustrations or giving specific representations to the contents presented. When designing imagination-based tasks, it is worth phrasing the instruction in such a way as to include suggestions on what kinds of representations are the most conducive to learning and information processing; it is also worth encouraging participants in the class to make the representations they create as elaborate and diverse as possible: vivid, multisensory, dynamic, exciting, contrastive, surprising, extraordinary, original, illogical, amusing, absurd, excessively bright, exaggerated, and relating personally to the student. Let us remember, too, that creating a narrative is more effective than individual representations[79].

To stimulate students' imagination, it is worth using the following methods[80]:

1. Encouraging students to bring unfamiliar objects to life by visualizing them in natural contexts. Encouraging them to imagine what purpose the objects were used for.

79 Cf. Przemysław Bąbel, Marzena Wiśniak, *12 zasad skutecznej edukacji, czyli jak uczyć, żeby nauczyć*, Gdańsk 2019.

80 Ibid.

2. Encouraging students to bring to life the people and situations that the viewer can see in paintings or sculptures. Encouraging them to create narratives about them.

3. Suggesting that the students enter into an artist's role – create a painting, sculpture, or performance. Encouraging students to reflect on how they would present a situation, person, or event and on how they would convey mood and emotions in a painting.

4. Encouraging the creation of multisensory representations, for example ones concerning the properties of various objects or the characteristics of individuals.

When activating imagination, it is worth ensuring appropriate conditions for it:

1. Providing a comfortable place for students to sit.

2. Preparing interesting props.

3. Ensuring an atmosphere conducive to the creation of representations, for example relaxing exercises, calm music, encouraging students to close their eyes, etc.

4. Suggesting that students engage all the senses in creating representations – for instance, considering what images, sounds, smells, and tactile sensations may go with a particular object, figure, or situation.

5. Encouraging students to draw or create other works using a variety of materials.

Three perspectives on education and art

Phot. Klaudyna Schubert, MIK 2023

Is it possible to explore the world without asking questions?

What is it, then, that we – teachers, organizers, educators, and enthusiasts – can and should do? How to act in order to create favourable conditions for growing up and maturing – for gradually entering adult life roles and learning the art of living? How to accompany young people in their often bumpy road to adulthood?

Before we present examples of educational activities related to different areas of creativity, we suggest getting acquainted with three interesting perspectives on education and art. They are inspiring educational theories that – apart from recommendations from psychological knowledge – we used when preparing proposals for educational interventions targeted at teenagers. We believe it is worth using these proposals regardless of what age group we are working with – children, adolescents, or adults. This is because they allow us not only to rethink our approach to the subject of our classes (in this case, art) but also to face questions about the response to and the long-term effects of the meetings with art we propose. If we seek to stimulate and maintain cognitive curiosity and to develop our students' interest in the topics we acquaint them with, let us join the authors of the educational theories discussed below in reflecting on how to make the most of the role of art in learning processes and where the potential traps and dangers lie.

Below, we outline the main assumptions made and conclusions drawn by scholars, encouraging the reader to refer to publications that offer an extensive presentation of the ideas outlined here. We wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the authors for their inspiring and enthusiastic approach to teaching and, above all, for highlighting the central element of the educational process – namely, the learners.

Interrogative thinking. Krzysztof J. Szmidt and Elżbieta Płóciennik's theories

Is it possible to explore the world without asking questions[1]?

The answer seems obvious: no, it is not. It is just as impossible to imagine the development of science without challenging the existing findings. It would hardly be possible to gain knowledge about social phenomena without investigating the nature of interpersonal relations. We would probably never even think of challenging the significance of questions in looking for solutions to philosophical dilemmas. And yet, questions are not equal…

The creative potential of questions was examined by Krzysztof J. Szmidt and Elżbieta Płóciennik, researchers investigating cognitive skills and the authors of the interrogative thinking theory[2]. In the textbook they prepared, an introduction to issues connected with the development of cognitive curiosity in children and adolescents, they present the most important findings concerning the processes of developing, improving, and practising open thinking, based on creative and critical observation of both physical and social phenomena and on learners' reflective examination of their own cognitive potentials.

Who is the master of questions?

Although school education seems to be founded on questions, and although the system of testing academic achievement consists in questions

1 Cf. Robert Fisher, *Lepszy start. Jak rozwijać umysł dziecka*, Poznań 2002, p. 170.

2 Krzysztof J. Szmidt, Elżbieta Płóciennik, *Myślenie pytajne. Teoria i kształcenie*, Łódź 2020.

being asked and answered, in practice there is no space in that system for open-ended questions, to which more than one good answer can be given. Factual questions, predominant in teaching, do not give students an opportunity to apply the already acquired knowledge or to practise higher-order cognitive skills. The empirical studies cited by the authors show that the majority of teachers' questions belong to the lower cognitive level: the dominant kind concerns facts and information remembered directly from school textbooks. These questions are referred to as knowledge testing questions – all they require is the recall and retrieval of information acquired before (for example: Who was Copernicus? Where do tadpoles live? What do you call a person who writes poems?)[3]. They are accompanied by pseudo-open-ended questions, also widely used, which seem to be open-ended at first glance, but in fact they force a specific individual answer. These are questions such as: Alex, what can you tell me about Archimedes' principle? Why does Juliusz Słowacki's poetry delight you? What can Józef Piłsudski be called? The practice of asking such questions can be described as a kind of game of guessing what the teacher had in mind[4].

The application of a model of education in which the person asking questions is the teacher and the one who answers them is the student is not conducive to the development of cognitive functions and does not encourage students to search for things worthy of interest independently and to inquire into their essence[5]. A teacher or educator acting as the "master of questions" effectively inhibit the development of their students' creative thinking. This teaching practice leads to a paradox: teachers believe that young people learn to ask questions by listening to the teacher's

3 Ibid., p. 161.
4 Ibid., p. 157.
5 Ibid., p. 169.

questions[6]. The lack of well-thought-out proposals for stimulating interrogative thinking stems from the fact the teacher "wants to check what the student knows rather than discover what is interesting to the student"[7].

An additional factor leading to the withdrawal of numerous teachers and educators from engaging in creative exploration, guessing and speculating, and confidently asking questions about the world around us is overstimulation with media reports on all possible topics. This phenomenon – referred to by American anthropologist and educationalist Neil Postman as the "peekaboo world"[8], in which specialists in and experts on everything (actual and self-proclaimed ones) try to outdo one another in explaining all kinds of natural, social, economic, and frequently also cultural or artistic phenomena – results in a discouragement of personal explorations and a lack of motivation to engage in critical reflection on issues interesting to us. "As a result of this atrophy of cognitive curiosity, even the most mysterious things cease to fascinate us, let alone everyday mundane things and issues! And so we are no longer fascinated and cease to ask questions!"[9]

A response to and remedy for the above set of factors inhibiting young people's cognitive development is Szmidt and Płóciennik's model of education based on interrogative thinking, defined as "all cognitive processes taking place in the asker's mind, connected with the activities of discerning,

6 Ibid., p. 170. See also: Dorota Klus-Stańska, *Paradygmaty dydaktyki. Myśleć teorią o praktyce*, Warsaw 2018.

7 Translated from: Dorota Klus-Stańska, "*Po co nam wiedza potoczna w szkole?"* in: *Pedagogika w pokoju nauczycielskim*, ed. Krzysztof Kruszewski, Warsaw 2000, p. 150.

8 See: Neil Postman, *Technopol. Triumf techniki nad kulturą*, trans. Anna Tanalska-Dulęba, Warsaw 1995.

9 Translated from: Krzysztof J. Szmidt, Elżbieta Płóciennik, *Myślenie pytajne*, op. cit., p. 216.

formulating, and reformulating problem questions that stem from curiosity and constructive cognitive anxiety and are triggered by a problem situation or by a task involving an intellectual, emotional, or practical difficulty"[10]. This model is rooted in the assumption that good and creative questions arise from astonishment[11], and what we are usually astonished by what we do not know or cannot explain[12].

Exploring problems

As adults, we tend to assume that the problems emerging in everyday life must be accepted, and we seldom wonder why things are as they are. Philosophers and psychologists claim, however, that having ready answers to all questions is a sign of dogmatism, lack of imagination, or low self-esteem rather than wisdom. Creative minds, by contrast, show a tendency to be easily astonished[13]. It is, therefore, particularly important when working with children and adolescents to stimulate their curiosity and follow together with them the new issues and surprises emerging in contact with the world, to use the novelty effect for exploring phenomena from different perspectives, to subject them to experiments (real and mental), to ask bold questions, and to advance daring hypotheses that must be subsequently verified.

A special feature of creative problem solving is the fact that it does not consist in solving problems constructed or defined by someone else, but in

10 Translated from ibid., p. 22.
11 Ibid., p. 92.
12 Ibid., p. 93.
13 Ibid., p. 95.

finding and defining one's own[14]. This makes it so important in educational processes to provide conditions enabling students to formulate their own questions and to analyse their own observations and experiences. German psychologist and educationalist Hans-Ludwig Freese asserts: "If the child is confirmed in the belief that adults know everything that is worth knowing and that all important questions have already been answered, with the answers already there to be learnt, he or she will cease to be astonished and amazed. He or she will also cease to listen to the questions suggested by intuition and scepticism"[15].

Open-ended questions do not result in the assimilation of many specific facts in a short time, but they teach thinking, making inferences, formulating hypotheses, and discussing; they develop speaking skills as well as the skills of asking questions and sharing ideas – consequently, they produce better long-term effects[16]. What is also characteristic about them, however, is that they do not easily come to mind by themselves; they require support and constant training if they are to become part of the process of learning about the world and the self.

"Whoever asks questions creates!"[17]

The concept of interrogative thinking directly translates into the practice of teaching creativity, which plays an indispensable role in our personal and

14 Ibid., p. 27. See also: E. Paul Torrance, *Education and the creative potential*, Minneapolis 1963.

15 Translated from: Hans-Ludwig Freese, *Nasze dzieci są filozofami*, trans. Urszula Poprawska, Kraków 2008, p. 16.

16 Krzysztof J. Szmidt, Elżbieta Płóciennik, *Myślenie pytajne*, op. cit., pp. 154–155.

17 Translated from ibid., p. 12.

social life – its absence would make art, science, innovation, and progress unthinkable. Thanks to it, we learn the strategies of exploring problems, making decisions, and looking for solutions. This is why, when designing lessons involving art, we should especially remember to make them truly creative – so that they serve as a space for learning, thinking, contemplating, and reflecting on oneself and the world.

Drawing on the findings of American creativity scholar Alane Jordan Starko[18], the authors of the concept of interrogative thinking recommend a focus on the following aspects of educational processes: providing children and teenagers with knowledge in various fields of creativity, developing practical creative skills, and building an appropriate environment conducive to the unfolding of creativity.

Just like working on the development of students' interrogative thinking skills, teaching creativity should include three important elements:

1. students looking for and exploring real problems;
2. solving problems;
3. communicating the solutions to other students and to the wider community.

In this kind of teaching, the teacher has to agree to a change of their traditional role at school:

18 Alane Jordan Starko, *Creativity in the classroom: School of curious delight*, New York – London 2018.

1. From the holder and provider of wisdom, they change into a seeker of problems, a coach, a spectator, and sometimes even a publishing agent.

2. If the students are to solve real problems, the creativity teacher should not only be responsible for providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills but also provide them with the kind of problems that the teacher does not know the answers to and then work together with the students to find solutions.

3. If the students are to communicate their ideas to others, the teacher should help them find ideas worth sharing and an audience willing to become acquainted with these ideas[19].

The intelligent eye. David Perkins – learning to think by looking at art

Invisible art

Whoever happened to witness (or use an opportunity to join) a group of blind people being guided around an art gallery will easily understand the phenomenon that accompanies the viewing of art, particularly modern art – its… invisibility.

As the guide's tale unfolds, concrete outlines begin to emerge out of vague forms and colours: word by word, successive elements of the work of art are named, and the links between them are uncovered. The narration

19 Krzysztof J. Szmidt, Elżbieta Płóciennik, *Myślenie pytajne*, op. cit., pp. 176–177.

includes comparisons to objects and situations known to us from everyday experience; their purpose is to convey the sensations, associations, and tensions connected with the presented work. Before discussing meaning, the artist's presumed intentions, and possible interpretations, the work of art itself appears in front of our eyes in its material form. We begin to see it.

This interesting – and indeed universal! – phenomenon of looking at the surrounding reality superficially is the subject to which David Perkins, a researcher investigating educational processes and a co-founder of the Harvard-based Project Zero[20], devoted his brilliant book, *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*.

Analysing the characteristics of human perception, Perkins observed an illusory belief, held by most people, that it is sufficient to turn one's eyes in the right direction. If, like the local barber quoted by Perkins, we sometimes think: "I always figured you just open your eyes and see"[21], then we have reached a blind alley. This manner of "looking" – with the images provided by the waves of light coming in through the eye-lens being registered on the retina – can be compared, at most, to the image obtained using a camera reproducing the visual characteristics of a particular interior, shape, and colour on photosensitive material. But this simple physical process does not reflect the character of our perception of the world.

20 The mission of Project Zero, operating since 1967 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is to expand knowledge and explore the educational processes leading to the enhancement of individuals' intellectual, creative, ethical, and cognitive potential. Information and materials on Project Zero are available at http://www.pz.harvard.edu.

21 David N. Perkins, *The intelligent eye: Learning to think by looking at art*, Santa Monica 1994, p. 7.

"A photographic film only captures the array of colours point by point. But when we look at a velvet chair in the corner of the room, we do not see a sprawl of colours. We see a dazzling spectrum of meanings"[22]. Our perception is interpretative.

When we look at a specific object, its function and meaning are usually comprehensible to us almost immediately. We do not need to analyse its shape, location in space, size, or weight to understand what we see. All these characteristics of a specific object find their way into our consciousness the moment we direct our attention to it[23]. It is different in the case of an encounter with a work of art – the work does not reveal its secrets right away. Looking at art requires thinking.

Art is "invisible" in two ways. First, the meaning present in a work of art is not necessarily visible at first sight, nor is it restricted to its visual form. It can be said that the hidden meaning of the work is still waiting for us to find it. Second, the strategy used by the artist is often designed as backstage theatrical machinery[24]. In order to discover what the work of art has to show and tell us, we therefore have to skilfully manage our attention. Without this, we will not only fail to understand the meaning of the art we view but we will also be unable to realize what we actually see. In this kind of situation, we realize that this is not a case of the work of art being invisible but a case of our way of looking not allowing us to see it[25].

22 Ibid., p. 7.
23 Ibid., p. 8.
24 Ibid., p. 23.
25 Ibid., p. 32.

Illusive completeness of perception

Most of us succumb to an illusion that Perkins called the completeness of perception. It seems to us that merely turning our eyes to something will be enough for us to see a particular object, figure, or scene. We are not aware of how selective and incomplete our seeing is and how schematically our perception of the world works[26].

Most images that we can see on a TV screen on in newspapers come from our own culture; they are usually close to us in terms of time, too. Except in early childhood, we need no help to understand them. The contents they communicate are clear and comprehensible to us. This is because we have the background knowledge that we share in our culture.

However, this sense of the world's comprehensibility, experienced every day, can lead us into a dangerous state of complacency – we no longer realize to what extent our way of interpreting the paintings we watch is based on what we already know and take for granted. When we stand in front of a work from a different epoch or culture (or from a less familiar social or age environment), we turn out to be totally unprepared for its reception. We often blame this on the works we view (claiming that their message is incomprehensible and "obscure"), whereas it is we who are unprepared to fully see them – we act in the photographic film mode, oblivious to the entire sphere of contexts, meanings, and interpretations[27]. Even if we try to understand what it is that we have in front of our eyes, we usually fall into the trap of stereotyped thinking[28] – we make use of fragmentary, in-

26 Ibid., p. 24.

27 Ibid., pp. 25–26.

28 Ibid., p. 82.

complete knowledge, not even attempting to place the work we are viewing in its proper native context (we often simply have no real opportunity to get to know these context because we do not know where to turn for help and explanation).

David Perkins proposes to divide the encounter with a given work of art into three stages: See (What do I see?), Think (What do I think about what I see?), and Wonder (What makes me wonder when I look at this object?). This is a set of questions that we should always have handy when facing a new work of art, unknown to us yet. In this way, by confronting the various perspectives on reality proposed by artists, we can stimulate the work of the mind, and by developing a habit of unhurriedly, reflectively, and questioningly entering into a relationship with a work of art, we build our thinking skills – which, after all, are needed in other domains of life as well.

What is important in the method proposed by Perkins is both the wisdom of looking as such and its consequences for the development of reflective thinking. Thus understood as multifaceted, comprehensive, and spread out in time, art education promotes not only gradually familiarizing oneself with art and understanding the aesthetic, social, and existential issues explored by artists, but also developing cognitive skills, going beyond mental stereotypes, and close observation of the world. The art of looking goes hand in hand with the art of thinking here.

Art as a tool for exploring and experiencing the world. Stefan Szuman's and Irena Wojnar's theories

Educators, curators, and organizers of cultural activities are art enthusiasts who, relying on the resources of knowledge, though often also

spontaneously and on their own initiative, find paths of access to the world of art and are not discouraged (actually, they are even fascinated) by its apparent incompatibility with the rules, principles, and forms of human interactions that we know from everyday life. For many people, however, this kind of sensitive and understanding approach to art is not obvious at all. Even if we count on intense thrills and emotions when going to see an exhibition, the artworks we see there may turn out not to make the expected impression or inspire any reflection, remaining blank and silent instead, as if they were behind a glass wall.

"How are we to reconcile this supposedly striking, irresistible, spontaneous, and obvious power of art with the indecisiveness of our reaction?"[29] asked Witold Gombrowicz in his diary. Indeed, this question is worth thinking over in the light of the theory of aesthetic education proposed by Stefan Szuman and Irena Wojnar.

The world of art does not open up to people automatically

Humans get to know the world with their minds and directly, through the senses and through their own actions: they see, hear, feel, and explore it through specific images which are the contents the perceived reality.

Stefan Szuman stressed the significance of art for personality development in children and adolescents – according to his theory, aesthetic education teaches students to perceive, experience, and feel reality and to understand the essence and purpose of human life through the lens of art. Art is a kind of mirror in which we can see the world and experience it anew.

29 Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary Volume One*, Evanston, IL, 1988, p. 24.

Through art, we can explore it more deeply, analyse and transform it, and thereby enrich and broaden our personality[30].

A work of art comes alive and becomes comprehensible for us as we delve into it, get to know it more and more fully, and experience it with increasing clarity. On the one hand, the educator's task is to make art available – to see to it that works of art have direct impact on their audience; on the other hand, their task is to make art accessible – through any activities that can induce demand for art or interest in art and develop the abilities of perceiving, understanding, and experiencing it properly. Sharing one's judgements and knowledge – engaging in conversations about how to look at, listen to, and comprehend a work of art – is meant to evoke interest and make it easier for the less proficient recipients of art to grasp what it conveys.

Szuman pointed out, however, that the world of art does not open up to people automatically[31], and that a work of art "does not begin to live its own life until it resounds in us and until it draws a response from us"[32]. For this reason – without questioning the possibility of intuitively and spontaneously reacting to stimuli from the world of art – he recommended introducing multiple exercises and drills into the educational process. Their aim was for students to gradually learn about various means of expression, techniques, perspectives, and creative interpretations of selected themes of art, used by artists of different epochs and schools. He saw the teacher's or educator's role as one of an "aesthetic preceptor," whose task is to

30 Cf. Stefan Szuman, *Sztuka dziecka,* op. cit.
31 Cf. Irena Wojnar, *Teoria wychowania estetycznego,* op. cit., p. 233.
32 Translated from: Stefan Szuman, *O sztuce i wychowaniu estetycznym*, Warsaw 1969, p. 20.

introduce students into the world of aesthetic culture, prepare them to make use of its value, develop their creativity, and enrich their personality[33].

In Szuman's opinion, the methods of aesthetic education require introducing the recipients of art to the nature and meaning of artistic language. Despite its direct sensory appeal, concreteness, and accuracy in expressing contents, the language of works of art is not comprehensible to everyone and makes it necessary to learn its special code. Each of the arts "speaks a language of its own" – it speaks in shapes, colours, sounds, words, movements, or gestures. When providing aesthetic education, we teach the expression and language of works of art – we teach students to get to their contents through their form.

Active contemplation

The starting assumption of Irena Wojnar's theory of education through art is the understanding that "all educational effect of art on a person depends on the occurrence of a personal aesthetic experience, namely, on that person making internal contact with a given aesthetic phenomenon"[34]. If the work is to induce a response in us, we need the kind of contact with it that will stimulate and intensify the activity of emotions, imagination, and the intellect simultaneously. "The very presence of art, even the most widely popularized, is (…) in some sense, a neutral fact – a possibility but not yet the necessity of impact"[35].

33 Irena Wojnar, *Teoria wychowania estetycznego*, op. cit., p. 233.
34 Translated from ibid., p. 151.
35 Translated from ibid.

In Irena Wojnar's perspective, art is an activity: it comprises not only the artist's creative process but also their personal expression and way of life manifesting itself in the creative attitude. Consequently, art is understood as a cultural product (the outcome of artistic creation) and at the same time as an activity (the creative process). "A person is educated not only thanks to viewing, listening, and reading but also thanks to their own activity in various domains of artistic expression"[36].

The entire process of education through art aims at developing a creative attitude, namely an "open-minded" one, thanks to which the person overcomes passive reception of external reality and develops a dynamic, understanding approach to relations with others and with themselves. A necessary condition is the transformation of the encounter with art into a process including not only in-depth assimilation of the artistic message of the work but also gradual discovery of the language in which art allows us to communicate with the environment – in a way that goes beyond strictly rational and logical cognition.

The concept of active contemplation proposed by Irena Wojnar[37] involves the activation of the art recipient's mental dispositions (especially imagination) – thus, in a way, the recipient adds and supplements the meaning of the work of art using their own experience and including the contents viewed in their own individual inner world. They trigger the creative translation of emotions, ideas, and feelings into a language accessible to them, placing the work of art in the framework of their familiar contexts and experiences. The seeming paradox in this expression highlights the dual nature of the creative act: "thinking into" the presented image, scene, or

36 Translated from ibid., p. 180.

37 Ibid., p. 181.

shape and simultaneously engaging one's internal resources, which allow one to enter into a kind of dialogue with the work that creatively develops and actualizes the vision, meaning, and message proposed by the artist.

Art should therefore be both an object of external cognition, allowing the skilful interpretation of artistic works and gestures, and a process of trying out and gradually gaining proficiency in the use of its languages.

On the trail of art

Phot. Klaudyna Schubert, MIK 2023 ©

The creative act is not performed by the artist alone.

One of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, Marcel Duchamp, opened a Pandora's box by granting – through artist's choice – the status of works of art to the objects found: he presented future generations of artists, critics, curators, theorists, collectors, and recipients with the constantly recurring challenge of defining art. Duchamp himself doubted if there was a point in striving to determine its clear boundaries; he even went as far as to argue that "ready-mades were a form of denying the possibility of defining art"[1].

The universal concept of art was also challenged by eminent art scholar Ernst Gombrich, who believed that there was no such thing as art at all and that one could only speak of artists and their creative work. He did not question the creative act itself and its products; he only doubted the possibility of imposing a unifying framework on these activities. He saw sense in studying individual or collective efforts that transformed the ways of seeing the world and recording – using various techniques and means of artistic expression – the experiences, sensations, ideas, and visions that became part of our cultural reality, reformed and expanded by artists. "Once these were men who took coloured earth and roughed out the forms of a bison on the wall of a cave; today some buy their paints and design posters for hoardings; they did and do many other things."[2] At the same time, he agreed to the use of what could be seen as a working concept of art, as long as we remained aware that no defining power should be attributed to it: "There is no harm in calling all these activities art as long as we keep in mind that such a word may mean very different things in different times and places"[3].

1 Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A biography*, New York 2014, p. 401.

2 Ernst H. Gombrich, *The story of art,* London 1995, p. 15.

3 Ibid.

If we refer to the words of artists themselves from different epochs, we will easily see that they focus on what they consider to be the most important dimensions of creative work. In this way, each of them develops and expands the realm of art in a direction of their choice. Taking the point of view of the audience for a change, we can look at the history of art as various ways of presenting, understanding, and exploring the world, although we will probably never find out with certainty which of the visions created by artists we have interpreted consistently with their original intention.

In response to these dilemmas, the communities of art theorists and scholars have been trying for a few decades to establish a concept of art broad enough to include everything that artists propose and everything that has been accepted by critics, art dealers, museums and exhibition institutions, and the audience (the institutional theory of art)[4]. A similar interpretation of the concept of art was proposed by popular British artist Grayson Perry, who, in a series of lectures delivered for the Tate Modern gallery, explained today's understanding of art as a product of several factors: the market values of works dictated by collectors' choices and purchasing power, the status granted to works by expert circles and their presence in renowned museum collections, audience interest shown by attendance at exhibitions, and, finally, the creator's occupational status (if something was created by an artist, it will probably be regarded as art)[5].

Art eludes precise, unambiguous, and total definitions. There are as many different and, usually, convincingly presented understandings and interpretations of the creative process and its products as there are artists, scholars,

4 See: *Sztuka*, in: *Encyklopedia PWN*, http://bitly.pl/vy84m (accessed 28.03.2023)

5 Grayson Perry, *Playing to the gallery: Helping contemporary art in its struggle to be understood*, London 2016.

and recipients. We have, by now, probably got used to the thought that every attempt to define the essence of art is as useful as it is incomplete…

One can stop at this conclusion, but one can (and should!) also make it a point of departure for answering the question of what art is. Confronting this challenge will allow us to gain many compelling though inevitably mutually exclusive viewpoints – as long as we are prepared to devote time and ingenuity and be honest in our explorations (following a diversity of possible hypotheses, taking various perspectives, and considering the consequences of our assumptions). And this is where we can see the essence of art education – confronting the question of what we need art for. In what way can we transform and enrich our understanding and perception of the world (and of ourselves!) if we begin to look under the surface of material reality, test different cognitive perspectives, examine the possibilities of our senses, explore the nature of emotions and feelings, inquire into the degree to which images construct our everyday life, philosophize about truth and illusion, derive inspiration from errors and accidental events, and experiment with imagination?

If we want to take up Marcel Duchamp's challenge and look for the meaning that art can bring into our lives today, let us remember that a work of art is not simply a rebus for us to solve. "[T]he creative act is not performed by the artist alone," Duchamp reminded us. "[T]he spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act"[6].

For the purposes of this book – and art education in general – we propose the adoption of an anthropological understanding of art as a type of social practice and a way of exploring and experiencing the world. Going beyond

6 Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A biography*, op. cit., p. 393.

the strictly historical and theoretical perspectives on art will enable us to overcome the paradoxes of contemporary attitude towards art and to see it as a symbolic record of human experience or, as Nicolas Bourriaud put it, "producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects"[7].

In subsequent chapters, we present diverse, frequently provocative, paradoxical, or perverse approaches to art proposed by artists in different epochs. They can serve as a point of departure in a search for the meaning of art together with young people, or – perhaps above all – help explore the multidimensional links and interrelations between us and the surrounding world of people and phenomena.

This is just a proposal, which everyone will certainly supplement with their own choices as their heart commands. We provide hints regarding where to look for inspiration, but it is up to teachers, cultural organizers, and educators to take the stage and the leading roles in this adventure game "on the trail of art," full of emotions and discoveries, though probably also not entirely free from frustrations and disappointments.

What is art?

If you have ever felt lost in a contemporary art gallery, wondering, for instance, whether the ladder set up there was part of an artistic installation or simply a piece of equipment forgotten by an assembly team, or if, while browsing the web, you have ever come across a riddle about whether the

7 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, Mathieu Copeland. Les Presses du Réel, 2022, p. 49.

object presented in a picture was a radiator or a work of art – then welcome to the world of philosophy!

"Is a thing beautiful because it appeals to us, or does it appeal to us because it is beautiful?"[8] asked Augustine of Hippo, and we can (and should!) consider the characteristics and consequences of our subjective perception of the world and the formation of judgements concerning the world. Who gives meaning to the objects and actions we view? How do we know that what the other person can see is what we can see? Why do some scenes and situations give us a thrill of emotion, while others have no impact on us at all? What will be important in encounters with art is not only the chosen work of art but also our reactions: thoughts, feelings, and attitudes to the observed phenomena.

Inspired by one of the manifestos of the Łódź Kaliska group, we propose – for the purposes of classes for adolescents – temporarily putting aside our personal beliefs about art and accept that "art is as it is"[9], and instead of a lecture on various understandings and interpretations of its meaning we propose to organize a fair of ideas, during which teenagers will have a chance to express their feelings and doubts (probably including aversion) about the world of art. The helpful aids will include reproductions or footage presenting diverse examples of creative works and activities: from church decorations, through classical representations in painting, to the works of various avant-garde groups, public art, advertising campaigns, and – finally – all expressions of creativity available on the Internet (including photographs posted on social media by the participants in the workshop).

8 Translated from: Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, vol. 1, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1962, p. 378.

9 Translated from: *Czkawka. 40 lat Grupy Łódź Kaliska*, ed. Adam Rzepecki, Radom 2020, p. 56.

As a warm-up, it is worth asking a few provocative open-ended questions, such as:

1. If everything can be art, why is not everything art?
2. What would happen if art ceased to exist?
3. For something to become art, how many people have to recognize it as art?
4. What would happen if all our everyday activities were transferred to an art gallery?
5. What kinds of paintings, objects, or other artefacts help express who we are?

It is worth writing down (or drawing/pasting) the outcomes of the discussion in the form of a shared mind map. This will make it possible to recapitulate the conceptions, ideas, interpretations, and examples of creativity generated during the workshop together or refer back to them during a different class devoted to art – in order to keep the adolescents' perspective as a point of reference for the possible further creative explorations.

Adam Rzepecki, *Starting from today, I am pretending to be an artist*, plein-air workshop in Osieki, 1981, Photo by Adam Rzepecki. Collection of the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art

The imaginary museum

The largest art gallery, open also outside the official opening hours of exhibition institutions, is the one you can visit by looking inside… your own mind. It is there, among the images stored in the memory, that André Malraux located the collection of the visual heritage of mankind, announcing that "what is becoming a new territory of reference for artists is each person's Imaginary Museum"[10].

In his celebrated essay published in 1947, Malraux described the phenomenon of artistic objects "going beyond" the boundaries of physical collections, mainly because of printed reproductions and due to their constant actualization in the imagination and memory of the recipients. This results in the "mysterious liberation from the power of time": we encounter works from different epochs outside all chronology, at different times, and from different sources. Today, we not only view them when visiting museums and galleries or when browsing albums, but we also commune with them almost incessantly – we live in a world dominated by images, which are present around us in a variety of forms. Classical works coexist with film adaptations, commercials, and countless photographs posted on the web.

We encourage free travels across epochs and styles in search of intriguing links, which – though probably different for each of us – will enable us to follow and discover the motifs and themes recurring over the centuries. Seeking out various representations of the major themes of art and philosophy – love, beauty, and transience – will make it possible to prepare

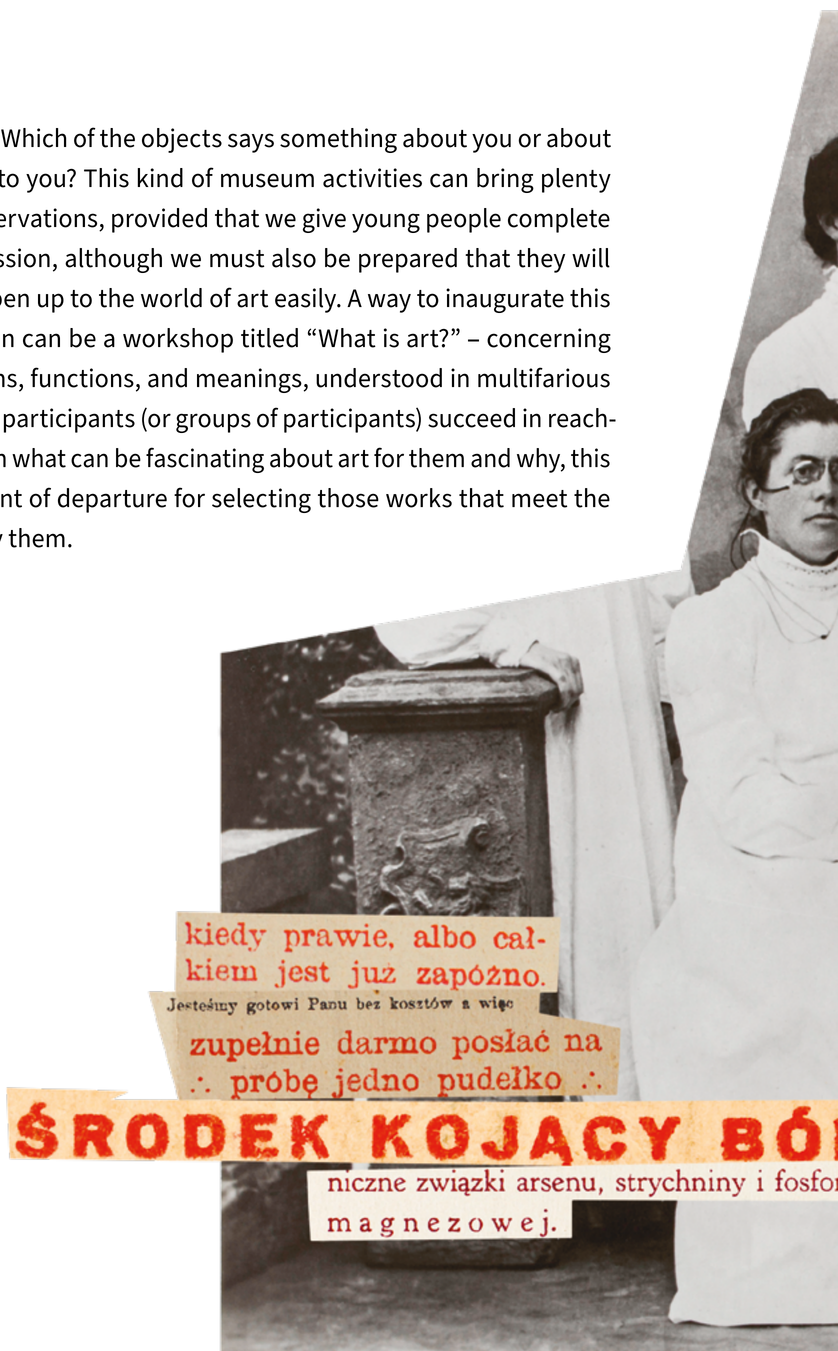
10 Translated from: André Malraux, "Muzeum Wyobraźni", trans. Irena Wojnar, in: *Antologia współczesnej estetyki francuskiej*, Warsaw 1980, p. 369.

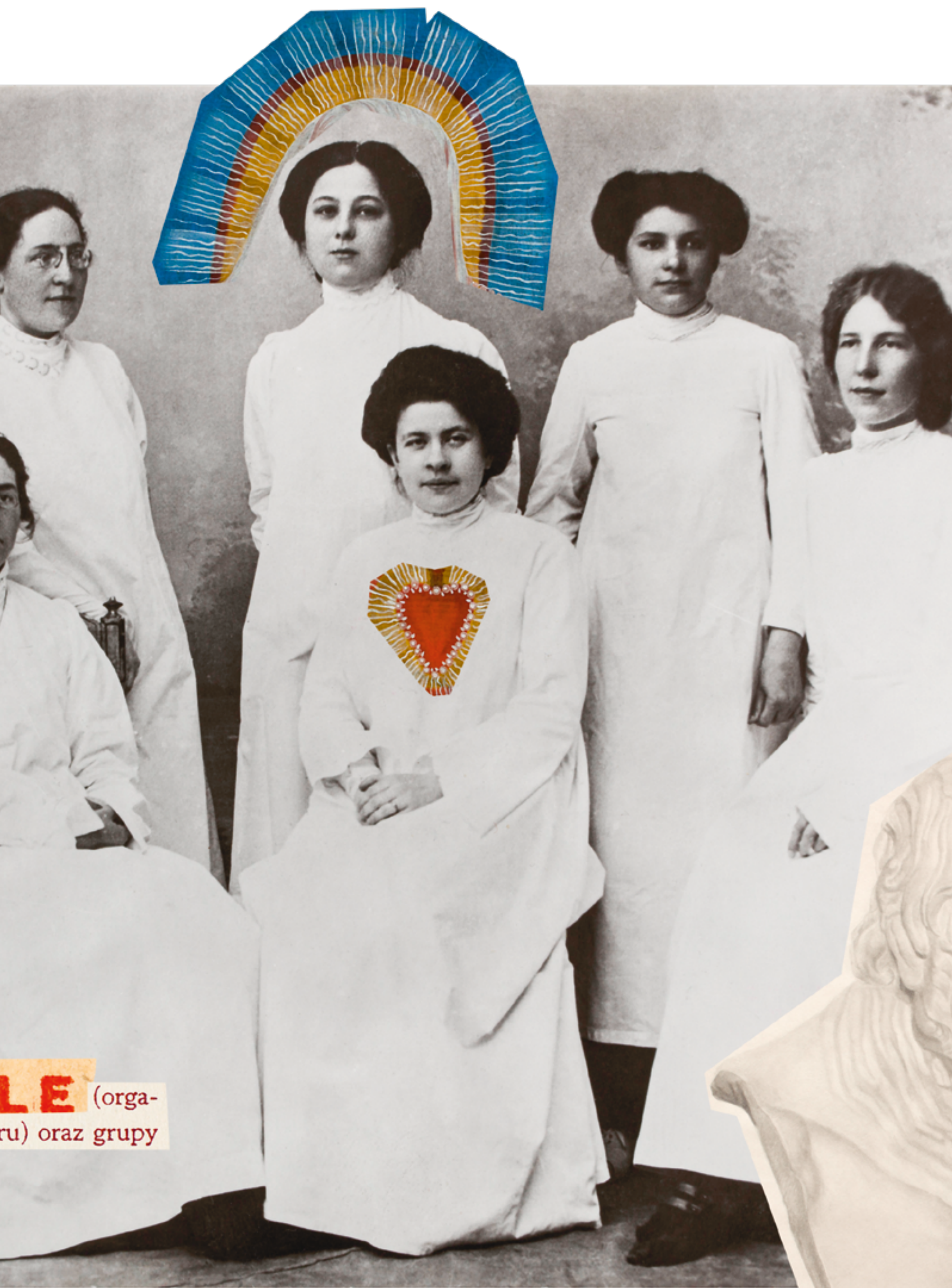
a map of topoi (culture's common places), read cultural codes, and identify the traces and sources of today's aesthetic choices in past epochs.

Visiting a museum or art gallery can be the beginning of a kind of "field game" – as long as we make sure that the works of art exhibited there are accompanied by a few interesting links referring to other collections in a given city or simply to the online world, where we can continue explorations together with the young people. It is important that the map of references prepared with adolescents in minds include what they perceive as familiar pop culture representations of universal topics: after all, the themes and heroes of ancient mythologies have their contemporary counterparts in films, cartoons, adventure literature, and computer games.

Young people themselves should be invited to take part in designing a "teenagers' route" through a museum of art gallery. This should be a relatively long process – in order for the encounters with art to go beyond the immediate first impressions (though these should be carefully noted, too, as signalling future responses of adolescent groups to the presented collection). It is advisable, moreover, to depart from the excessive focus on historical accuracy (this had better be left to experts), attempting instead, together with the adolescents, to search for and select works relating to universal and cross-sectional topics. If we wish to help young people to discover and "experience" the art presented to them, what will be useful is a joint quest for artworks that express specific moods and emotions. Another option is simply to let teenagers ferret around in the gallery on their own in search of works that, for some reason, they find intriguing. Let us also note down the reactions and answers to the questions: What made an impression on you? What attracted your attention? What do you think about when looking at this work? What associations does it bring to your mind? Would you like to place any of the objects in your room? Which of the works would you like to

take a selfie with? Which of the objects says something about you or about topics important to you? This kind of museum activities can bring plenty of interesting observations, provided that we give young people complete freedom of expression, although we must also be prepared that they will not necessarily open up to the world of art easily. A way to inaugurate this kind of exploration can be a workshop titled "What is art?" – concerning its numerous forms, functions, and meanings, understood in multifarious ways. If individual participants (or groups of participants) succeed in reaching a conclusion on what can be fascinating about art for them and why, this will be a good point of departure for selecting those works that meet the criteria defined by them.





Kira Pietrek, *Pain-soothing Agent*,
Collage from the collection of the Małopolska Virtual Museums, 2023.

Space

We usually treat space as an existing system of buildings, roads, and squares whose shape and perception are determined by their functions: a shop, a museum, a school, a motorway, a bank, a cathedral, a clinic, or a car park. This space grows incrementally, at different times, and its elements, designed mainly with usefulness in mind, more or less successfully become part of the neighbourhood, district, city, or village.

However, history abounds in examples of holistic and organic thinking about space: Le Corbusier designed housing units – blocks of flats meant to function as self-sufficient estates; Oskar Hansen understood space as the background for the changing events in the life of nature and people – the force shaping it was supposed to be its inhabitants, with their diverse activities and mutual relations[11]. In 2005, during the *Delete!* Campaign, one of Vienna's streets was given an uncommon appearance for two weeks: all advertising and informational signboards were covered with yellow fabric. In this way, the campaigners drew attention to the problem of ownership – who does public space belong to[12]?

Thinking about space as a dynamic and socially determined phenomenon can become the germ of many creative activities making us realize the effect of space formation on human relations. Can space favour contacts or

11 Cf. "Oskar Hansen", in: *Culture.pl*, https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/oskar-hansen (accessed 28.03.2023). See also: "Świat można uzdrowić, a architekt ma do tego narzędzia", Magda Roszkowska interviewing Aleksandra Kędziorek, *Autoportret. Pismo o dobrej przestrzeni* 2017, vol. 2 issue 59.

12 Cf. *DELETE! Delettering the public space*, https://www.steinbrener-dempf.com/en/portfolio-item/delete/ (accessed 28.03.2023).

encourage them? In what kinds of places do we feel good and why? What is it that repels us from the spaces we dislike? What elements of architecture may encourage people to meet in small groups, and what elements will work well as venues for concerts and picnics?

Designing a perfect city, square, classroom, courtyard, club, or theme park may start with an observational walk around the neighbourhood using peaked caps that, by obscuring the upper parts of viewed space, will help the viewer focus on the lower parts, closer to the ground (and conversely – the same exercise can be repeated with the lower part of the space eliminated from the field of vision, for example by means of cardboard frames). An important element of the creative process will consist in trying out various configurations of individual components of the proposed vision: they can be prepared in the form of a miniature model, or – venue and budget permitting – we can try a 1:1 design using construction modules (these can be cubic pouffes and partition walls or screens, made of cardboard or reinforced fabric and easily portable). An advantage of the latter solution is the possibility of personally testing the spatial solutions devised: the participant-designers will have a chance to try out the actual effect of the space they have designed on the people who find themselves in it.

It is important when designing to consider the needs of different groups of users: Will the space we have designed give a sense of security to parents with small children or to seniors, and will individuals with special needs – such as blind people or those in wheelchairs – find their place in it?

13A Südbahnhof
HALTESTELLE
Jetzt
8936
GRÄF
STEYR
W 8936 LO

Steinbrener/Dempf & Huber, *Delete! Delettering the Public Space*, 2005.
Photo by Steinbrener/Dempf & Huber. Courtesy of the artists.

Art behind the scenes

"What if the art of the Impressionists belongs not on a box of chocolates but on a case of dynamite?" wonders Waldemar Januszczak, a populariser of art[13]. If we study the history of the movement that revolutionized thinking about painting, we will find out how strongly the changing attitude towards traditional painting was influenced by technological and scientific development. The popularization of the portable easel and handy boxes for synthetically manufactured paints made plein-air trips possible. The new design of paintbrushes allowed for heavier strokes. Progress in optics brought knowledge on the physical nature of light, and the growing popularity of photography changed the ways of thinking about the composition and framing of scenes.

Similar links with the development of scientific and technological knowledge can be sought also in the paintings of the old masters, who drew abundantly on discoveries in the field of optics (the use of a system of mirrors and ingenious optical instruments made it possible to achieve naturalistic representations of human figures, interiors, furnishings, and ornaments)[14].

An interesting topic for workshops with adolescents may concern what is behind the scenes of artistic works, various techniques, or the secrets of painting, sculpture, and photographic studios. How were paints manufactured? Why was blue the most expensive pigment? How does a camera obscura work?

13 Waldemar Januszczak, *The Impressionists: Painting and Revolution* (TV series), Part 1: *The Gang of Four*, ZCZ Films 2011.

14 Cf. David Hockney, *Secret knowledge*: *Rediscovering the lost techniques of the Old Masters*, London 2009.

Learning about the techniques and the conditions in which artists of different epochs made their groundbreaking discoveries, crucial for the subsequent development of painting, will enable teenagers to go beyond the purely visual reception of the results of artistic work. In a way, works of art can become time machines that will transport us into a different cultural context, and by peeking behind the scenes of artistic work we can better understand the challenges faced by creators across epochs and arts.

Creating linocuts, etchings, pop-up images (three-dimensional pictures "popping up" from a book when it is opened), pinhole photography, stop motion animations, glass painting, creating stained-glass windows, ceramic and weaving techniques, and even framing paintings – each of these can be an interesting experience, making it possible to go beyond the purely visual reception of art. The making of such works by students (for example, transferring a pattern they have designed onto a T-shirt or a cotton bag using screen printing) can be organized as part of an exhibition of works made using a given technique; alternatively, a series of creative "workshops" can be proposed, during which teenagers will have a chance to experiment with a variety of materials and tools used in arts and crafts.

Albrecht Dürer, *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman*, ca. 1600, Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection API

In the realm of symbols

At school, the encounter with Symbolism frequently takes the form of a "What did the author have in mind?" guessing game. When looking at the works of Symbolists, we try to interpret and explain the meanings that artists may have put into their paintings. But Symbolism is rooted in the need to convey, using artistic means of expression, the kind of contents that are accessible exclusively to intuitive and emotional cognition[15]. How to reach the layer of experiences and emotions communicated through fairy-tale, chimerical, and often inexplicable scenes, figures, and moods? How to get into contact with the artist's subjective world, and where to look for clues to the thoughts and sensations presented in the painting?

The key to delving into the world of symbolism can be working together with young people to identify the mechanisms of psychological introspection in symbolist works. Loneliness and anguish, but also the mystery of human existence; the heavy burden of the past a person carries; looking for a way to express one's longings – these are not presented directly but by means of mood or through a juxtaposition of fantastic elements forcing their way into the reality of our sensory world. What can serve as an inspiration for this kind of lesson is Jacek Malczerski's *Vicious Circle*, a painting considered to be a manifesto of Polish Symbolism; depicted in the painting is an adolescent boy sitting on top of a ladder put up in a painter's studio, pensively looking at the circle of fantastic figures whirling around him – perhaps emerging from his imagination or dreams[16].

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15 Cf. "Symbolizm", in: *Encyklopedia PWN* https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/symbolizm;3981957.html (accessed 28.03.2023).

16 Cf. Karolina Dzimira-Zarzycka, "Jacek Malczewski, *Błędne koło*", in: *Culture.pl* https://culture.pl/pl/dzielo/jacek-malczewski-bledne-kolo (accessed 28.03.2023).

It is worth acting out a similar situation with adolescents, with a contemporary young boy playing the main role. Who and what will we place on the bright, joyful, ecstatic side of the representation? What scenes and figures will be in the dark region of the circle? When working on the contemporary version of *Vicious Circle*, we can use illustrations from the press or the Internet to seek out scenes and figures that will best express the anxieties and longings felt today. We can also try other techniques: creating a living painting, in which teenagers themselves, posing as the realistic or fantastic figures of their choice, will attempt to portray the inner world of emotions, memory, and visions of the future (the effect of a living sculpture can be photographed). Let us encourage young people to include not only everyday topics important to them but also global phenomena – climate-related, political, and social. Just like Jacek Malczewski's painting became a manifesto of an epoch more than a hundred years ago, a work created by young people today may offer an insight into their way of experiencing the world and a provide us with set of images that their experiences are centred around.

The guides around the world of symbols could also be other artists of the Symbolist era: Gustav Klimt, Arnold Böcklin, Odilon Redon, Mikhail Vrubel, and many others.

Jacek Malczewski, *Vicious Circle*, 1895–1897,
Foundation of Raczynski at the National Museum in Poznan

Art for and art against

"I consider human thought to be the first human sculpture. One can treat one's thought as an artist treats his work,"[17] said German artist, teacher, and social activist Joseph Beuys. The idea of "social sculpture" he formulated – according to which every human activity can be regarded as a creative act – took art far beyond the rigidly defined aesthetic boundaries. What is seen as an extension of this idea is the work of Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei, who not only engages in numerous artistic activities but also undertakes political interventions, documents humanitarian catastrophes, and conducts civic investigations[18]. Commenting on his blog, he says that it creates rather than presents reality: "I'm sure, once somebody looks at my blog, they start looking at the world differently without even knowing it"[19].

Can teenagers have an influence on the ways in which other people perceive the world? An advisable strategy is to work together with them in choosing the values and problems important to them and then consider possible persuasive interventions that could induce people to change their attitude. We ought to remember that one picture is worth a thousand words, which is why we should see to the visual aspects of the campaign. This kind of creative activities require not only ingenuity but also perseverance and consistency; this is why the results of work should be published and disseminated, if only on social media – another option is to encourage

17 Translated from: Joseph Beuys, *Jeder Mensch ein Kunstler. Gesprache auf die "documenta 5"*, trans. Krystyna Krzemień, hrsg. C. Bodenmann-Ritter, Frankfurt 1972, as cited in: http://teoriaarchitektury.blogspot.com/2010/11/joseph-beuys-kazdy-artysta-ten-nowy.html

18 *Ai Weiwei speaks with Hans Ulrich Obrist*, London 2016, pp. 28–32.

19 Ibid., p. 5.

adolescents to keep a thematic blog or vlog. Aesthetically well-thought-out activity can not only change the perception of a socially important issue but also encourage other people around us to join the campaign.

To prepare for the joint effort of designing costumes and props that will express opposition to – or support for – a cause important to us, it is worth watching documentation from previous similar artistic interventions. A good guide to the world of creative activism is Cecylia Malik – a painter, performer, and activist from Kraków who has co-authored numerous socio-artistic campaigns for ecological causes.

Modraszek Kolektyw [Alcon Blue Collective], socio-artistic campaign to save the Zakrzówek district from building development, 2011. Photo by Bogdan Krężel →

A record of the road, being in the world

In 1967, young artist Richard Long created a special type of sculpture: by persistently walking to and fro across a grass-grown piece of land, he trod and then photographed… a straight line. This artistic action, titled *A Line Made by Walking*, inspired by reflection by daily journeys to the university and back, initiated his further creative explorations born out of a fascination with routes and paths, making up a kind of maps of traces left in space by people moving around.

Reflection on our activities and movements can take the form of drawing maps of our town, district, or neighbourhood. The relative importance of places will be determined by their users' individual choices – the everyday and irregular routes taken by individual young people. Which way do I walk to school? What do I pass by on my way there? Where do I meet with my friends? Which places do I avoid and why? The information collected can be transferred to a paper or virtual map of the vicinity (optimally, one that the student has prepared on their own), thus presenting the "hot" and "cool" areas in order to reflect together on their characteristic features – repulsive or attractive.

Such subjective maps can serve as a point of departure for further creative activities, such as the choice of strolling routes along which the young people will have a chance to share their stories connected with specific places. It is also worth trying to create a multimedia version of these strolls: in the form of audio recordings of the characteristic sounds heard along a particular route (What does my route to school sound like?) or photographs and videos taken at specific times of day (sunset behind the shop on the hill). The effects of the work can be successfully used during local picnics or youth exchanges – this will give teenagers an opportunity to share their ways of seeing and perceiving the world.

Richard Long, *A Line Made By Walking*, 1967, © Richard Long. All rights reserved. DACS / Artimage 2022. Photo by Richard Long.

Iwona Robotycka, Barbara Lorenz, *Feast with Design at Master Talowski's*, Manor House in Michałowice, 2023, photo by Barbara Lorenz. Courtesy of the artists.

Cultivating culture

What role does nature play in culture? And conversely: how does culture shape nature? Can culture be cultivated? Can natural phenomena become works of art? Who holds the copyright for reality?

The coexistence of man and nature can be the subject of many fascinating discussions and creative explorations involving art. A good starting point will be reflection on the origins of the very concept of "culture," which initially referred mainly to the tilling (cultivation) of soil and was only later extended to cover the spiritual and material achievements of human societies[20].

How do we cultivate culture today? Spectacular works of land art (landscape art, ecological art) – such as Robert Smithson's famous *Spiral Jetty*, interferences in the landscape by the artistic duo of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, and the ecological art by Agnes Denes sowing wheat on a rubbish dump in New York – can serve as an inspiration for young people's artistic expressions on the links between man and nature.

What can provide an opportunity for adolescents to create such works is artistic activities organized around places that are strikingly neglected (such as planting a garden around a bus shelter) or building their own micro-worlds where man and nature will be able to meet "on equal terms": designing and tending plant labyrinths (osier will work fine as living walls) or arranging paths with various types of natural stepping ground – made of stones, sand, pines, leaves, or twigs. An excellent exercise in interspecific

20 Cf. "Kultura", in: *Encyklopedia PWN*, https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/kultura;3928887.html (accessed 28.03.2023).

empathy – inspired by Bogdan Achimescu's *Mountain of Equipment* – can consist in drawing a panorama of the local surroundings and supplementing it with cartoon bubbles containing the thoughts and demands aimed at people that the plants, stones, sun, streams, and animals existing around us could supposedly formulate.

It is also possible to try to reproduce James Turrell's light explorations and treat a fragment of the sky seen through a window at different times of day as a painting. Are we dealing with contemplation of nature here, or do we see it as an abstract painting "framed" by a window? If we choose to "portray" a fragment of the surroundings as seen from a particular window at school, in the gallery, or in the community centre, we can emphasize its status by designing a frame around the window – this artistic gesture will give it turn it into a work of art.

Images of our times

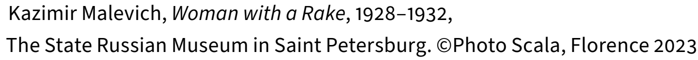
What is worth immortalizing? What were and are artists guided by when creating historical and genre scenes, ubiquitous in the history of painting? Who is present and who is not to be seen in representations from previous epochs? Who can be depicted in a painting today?

An attention-engaging point of departure for a class on everyday life (and, by extension, historically important events) may consist in "cataloguing" the figures presented in a selected work of art: Who are they? What are they doing? Why have they been depicted? The next step may be an attempt to identify their contemporary counterparts – occupations, social groups, and their roles defined by age, sex, or the amount of power. In the case of historical scenes, it is worth trying to find a modern counterpart – an event

similar in terms of character and significance (who could be a contemporary Rejtan?). Let us not be afraid of violating the principle of decorum; associations should concern the essence of the presented scene rather than "rewrite" historical events into contemporary ones in detail. Next, it is worth encouraging adolescents to name a memorable event from the history familiar to them – the history they have personally experienced; this is an excellent opportunity to discuss how various public and media events shape us. These can be images from the world of sport, technology, politics, fashion, art, or ecology – the key will be the symbolic meaning of the event they choose. What would teenagers consider worth immortalizing as an expression of the hopes and dilemmas of our times and why? Let us then try to "construct" the chosen scene in the form of a living picture, a collage of press photographs, or a video postcard.

Similar classes can be devoted to ordinary life topics: what images and behaviours accurately capture the specificity of our everyday life? The freedom in choosing scenes and situations is unlimited; also, artistic techniques may include not only realistic photography, drawings, and collages but also more metaphorical representations, such as using a poster or the language of advertising.

Jan Matejko, The Hanging of the Sigismund Bell at the Cathedral Tower in 1521 in Kraków, 1874, National Museum in Warsaw. Photo by Krzysztof Wilczyński


Kazimir Malevich, *Woman with a Rake*, 1928–1932,
The State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg. ©Photo Scala, Florence 2023

Fashion

If a ranking of themes most often found in paintings was to be created, one of the top three would certainly be… clothes. Presented with meticulous precision, carefully chosen as a sign of the wealth and status of the figures portrayed, fabrics and clothing also frequently became an opportunity to demonstrate painterly artistry.

It is possible to look at paintings of different epochs as a fashion catalogue – not only to use them as a source of knowledge about the aesthetic tastes of a given time or follow changes in the canons of beauty, but also to seek ideas and inspirations for outfits of our own in the wealth of diverse styles. The journey across centuries devoted to fashion may serve as an opportunity to take a closer look at the fashion choices we make today: what are we guided by when selecting clothes, hairstyles, and interior décor? Do we try to become similar to other members of our peer group or manifest the fact of belonging to a particular subculture, or, on the contrary, do we seek to stress our autonomy and find an individual style?

For the workshop devoted to fashion, it is worth preparing examples of various cultural references, following their recurring popularity in different periods (for instance: slim-fit pants and tight-fitting legwear inspired by medieval courtiers' outfits; infanta-style crinolines juxtaposed with pin-up dresses; celebrities' outfits draped to resemble Greek and Roman robes; Viking/runic patterns juxtaposed with paraphernalia characteristic of motorcycle and music subcultures). Which of them do we find attractive today and which ones, in our opinion, are fit for the scrap heap and why? Discussion should include elements of reflection concerning the problems faced by contemporary fashion industry: textile waste, the philosophy of second-hand clothing, and conscious consumerism.

The fashion class should have a practical dimension, too: it is worth preparing a few typical items of clothing from different periods for students to try on to see if such garments could be worn today and to use them to compose their own proposals of outfits. These can be: puff sleeves, a top hat, a net fascinator, elbow-length buttoned gloves, a turban, a fob watch, a ruff, a stole, a tutu, a cloak, Venetian masks, a pince-nez, a kilt, and various types of fabrics (tulle, felt, silk, etc.), so that participants in the workshop can examine their properties with their own eyes and hands and decide what kinds of clothing they could be used with. It is worth choosing props and accessories similar to those that can be found in paintings belonging to the collection teenagers are visiting the gallery to see.

An interesting continuation of the lesson can consist in students proposing their own clothes (for everyday or carnival purposes) inspired by art – surrealistic, Impressionistic, or geometrized. They can be made of simple materials, such as wrapping paper, cardboard boxes, plastic wrap, strings, and wires; they can also be covered with paint or supplemented with a few colourful accessories. At the end, we may organize a mini-disco – a carnival party at which everyone will dance wearing an outfit they have designed. It is worth inspiring young people to go beyond their everyday ideas of clothing: perhaps someone will have a mind to wear a Warholian Campbell's soup can, a pyramid dress, or a cloak inspired by Hokusai's *Great Wave*?

A subjective look through the objective lens

What do we see when we look? Do the paintings we view uncover or, on the contrary, cover reality? We have got used to treating photography as a faithful and reliable reproduction of reality. What we expect them to provide is testimony to and documentation of what the world looks like

and what happened. With excitement, we watch scenes involving us, captured in photos, to find out what we "really" look like and how others see us. However, as David Hockney aptly observed, "[p]hotography is all right if you don't mind looking at the world from the point of view of a paralyzed cyclops – for a split second"[21]. We can read much from a photographic perspective on reality, but it does not reflect our experience of being in the world.

The eye is constantly on the move, and the fragments of images it registers compete for our attention – only a small proportion of these images actually make it through to our consciousness and become embedded in our memory. What is more, the flat, two-dimensional reproduction of reality is usually helpless when confronted with the depth of landscape, the dynamics of events, and the unique atmosphere we perceive and with our subjective response to stimuli from the environment. But each picture reflects someone's perspective on something and is taken from a particular point of view.

Together with adolescents, we can take the challenge of capturing the subjective experience of a selected scenery by means of photos. It is worth focusing on distinctive, eye-catching elements: the classroom as seen from the front desk and from the back desk, a shaft of light falling through

21 *David Hockney – A Chronology*, ed. David Hockney, Hans Werner Holzwarth, Taschen 2020, p. 206.

Zofia Rydet, from the series titled *Polish Documentations 1950–1978*, © The Zofia Rydet Foundation →

a slightly open door; a picture distorted by a bottle/glass or an aquarium full of water; human figures and objects reflected in polished elements of furniture; a top view or a worm's eye view of a human figure.

Exercises in looking by means of a lens can serve as a warm-up for creating incredible visual tales – photographic or video-based. In the "realistic" variant, we will focus on reproducing an individual perspective, recording frame by frame the eye's movements over the surroundings; in the "fantastic" variant, we can freely give ourselves over to constructing imaginary worlds, obtained by juxtaposing series of pictures of the same space taken from different perspectives. Venue permitting, it is worth holding an exhibition of photos or a film show – and inviting the audience to a debate on the nature of the visual world and the ways of seeing it.

Mood, drama, light

Many artists use spectacular light effects to communicate the drama of events, build a sense of three-dimensionality and depth, create the desired mood, direct our attention to the most important scenes, emphasize gestures and facial expressions, etc. The play of light and shadow can be found not only in paintings by the old masters – in Georges de la Tour or in Joaquín Sorolla's Impressionist works – but also in in contemporary film productions. In his excellent study on the history of paintings, David Hockney even argues – only half-jokingly – that the lighting technique used in Hollywood was invented by… Caravaggio[22].

22 David Hockney, Martin Grayford, *Historia obrazów. Od ściany jaskini do ekranu komputera*, trans. Ewa Hornowska, Poznań 2019, p. 172.

It is a good idea to propose light-based games to teenagers: experimenting with various types of light (warm/cool, beam/diffuse); building a candle-lit stage; highlighting facial expressions or gestures using an electric torch or a spotlight; suggesting the presence of figures by means of the shadows they cast; human figures gathered around a bonfire or a lamp on a table and "disappearing" in the darkness. During plein-air trips, it is possible to organize night photography sessions and use long exposure times – watch out: this technique is bound to register unidentified glows, which may seem to us to prove the existence of a world of supernatural apparitions!

In a gallery of museum, when discussing coloured phenomena, we can together explore the effects of using light to emphasize the vividness of colours and the depth of the painting – even "flat" oil paintings will take on depth and an internal "gleam" when spotlit, and looking for details or following the tale about the scene presented in the painting will be much more attractive when we use a torch as a pointer – the eye will be naturally following the light, excluding the parts of the painting less relevant at a given moment from the field of vision (strong light – potentially harmful to paintings – is not necessary for this; turning off the main lighting is enough).

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, ca. 1595–1596,
Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg (SPSG)/ Photo by Hans Bach

Yayoi Kusama, *The Spirits of the Pumpkins Descended into the Heavens*, 2015, exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Photo by Ngok Ching Yuet Suet, Wikimedia Commons

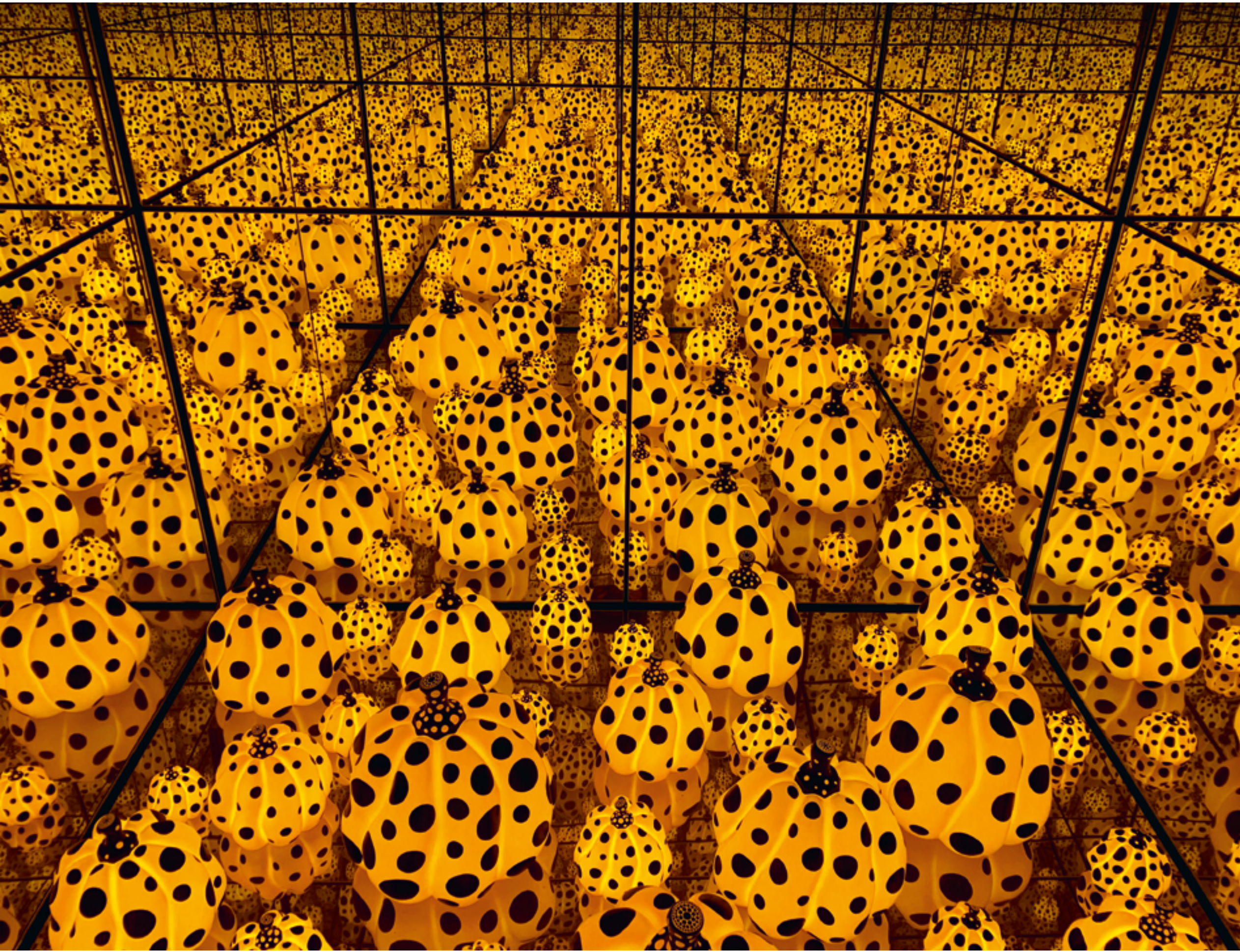
Illusion games

"I dream of a painting that I could fully immerse myself in,"[23] Leon Tarasewicz once confessed, and then he created an extraordinary labyrinth made up of several rows of columns with coloured stripes painted on them, reflected in the mirrors installed between them. When entering the installation, one may feel as though one is immersing oneself in infinity…

The topic of infinity can also be approached in a different way. In her works, Japanese painter and performer Yayoi Kusama uses multiplied visual motifs (her characteristic one is dots repeated in various colourful configurations – she painted them even on water!). M.C. Escher designed "impossible" figures and structures by skilfully transferring three-dimensional objects onto a flat surface. Michelangelo Pistoletto's photographic portraits placed on mirrors "draw" viewers into the reflected image together with the space behind their backs. All these artists refer the viewers far beyond the frames and the physical surface of the painting. Thanks to the techniques and perspectives they used, we are transported into a space accessible only to the imagination, physically non-existent but perceived by the mind deluded by the senses.

Optical illusions, mirror reflection games, and hypnotizing repetitions of motifs can be used in the study of sensory perception issues and the laws of physics. Learning about spectacular examples of graphic or photographic illusions – including the hyperrealistic ones – can inspire adolescents to create their own works in which, by means of the derealizing technique of foreshortening, by manipulating the sizes of foreground and background

23 Translated from: "Leon Tarasewicz, Instalacja malarska", in: https://mnk.pl/wystawy/leon-tarasewicz-instalacja-malarska (accessed 28.02.2023).



objects and figures, and by applying skilful photomontage that allows for surprisingly moulding and distorting space, they will create breathtaking optical traps or visions of unreal worlds on a flat surface. Experiments of this kind develop creativity and facilitate learning the laws of optics. What can also bring good results is experimenting with audio material: looping phrases, experimenting with *musique concrète* ("concrete music"), and playing music tracks or recordings of the human voice backwards.

W SAMO POŁUDNIE
1989 - 2009

Sanja Iveković, *Invisible Women of Solidarity*, 2009, installation, collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

Social and cultural roles

Social and cultural reality is co-created also by the way in which it is presented in art. A painting is never neutral in this respect. The artist assigns specific roles to the figures depicted. They can choose to highlight or foreground them or leave them in the background; ennoble or degrade them. They can also ignore them altogether…

When discussing cultural and social and roles in the past and in the contemporary world, we should make the spectrum of cultural issues and contexts discussed as wide as possible: from the changing perception of male and female roles, through ecological issues, ideas concerning the development of civilization, home and family life, exercising power and authority, participation in political and religious life, and hierarchies of values.

While viewing works of art – either old historical and genre scenes or contemporary representations of social themes, particularly those present in critical art – let us try to do a mental experiment: where would I be in the world presented by the artist and what role would I be playing? Who is represented in this painting and who is not? What figures are missing if the painting is to reflect the full array of interrelations and mutual social influences associated with the presented problem?

Practical workshops may consist in participants taking photographs of one another in whatever poses and roles they choose and then virtually sticking them on the existing reproductions of the works discussed – in order to supplement the works and add some part of the presented story that is important from each young person's point of view. What is it that makes us identify with some figures rather than with others? What characteristics of the figures are important to me? Is there a scenario in which I could be

the main figure? What possibilities of action would I have in the world presented? Would my voice be heard? Whose life could I have an influence on?

Inspiration for a critical look at social reality can be drawn from the works of Sanja Iveković, who brings female figures involved in breakthrough historical moments back from oblivion and restores visibility to them, or from the works of Yinka Shonibare, who transforms images of the past by adding traces of colonialism, absent in paintings from the epoch.

Emotions

The history of art abounds in expressive and vivid representations of emotional states. From realistic sculpture representations, through painterly studies of madness (or the contrary: delicately suggested feelings of joy, astonishment, confusion, or embarrassment), to sketches of mental states captured in theatrical masks. Emotions are also signalled by the intensity of colours, by how harmonious or disturbingly unstable the composition is, or by means other than purely visual ones – for example, when asked to interpret Edvard Munch' well-known painting *The Scream*, the famous performer Marina Abramović installed an empty iron frame in the Ekeberg Park in Oslo through which the audience could "scream into the void as much as they pleased"[24].

What do emotions look like? Can they be good or evil? Where do they come from? What causes them? What do they tell us? Is it worth being guided by

24 Marina Abramović, *Pokonać mur. Wspomnienia*, trans. Anna Bernaczyk, Magdalena Hermanowska, Poznań 2018, p. 414.

John Pass, *Sixteen Faces Expressing the Human Passions*,
after Charles Le Brun, 1821,
Wellcome Collection

them? Can they be controlled? It is a good idea to start working together with adolescents on recognizing and expressing emotions with simple exercises in observing and "cataloguing" typical manifestations of emotional states – facial expressions and gestures – and the physical sensations that accompany them, such as sweating palms, a heavy feeling on the chest, stiff neck, and "butterflies in the stomach." Inspired by examples from selected works of art, we can create living sculptures representing selected mental states – this can be done individually or in groups.

Another option is to use theatrical masks, prepared in advance or created with the teenagers: a helpful aid in working on accurately depicting of the facial expressions characteristic of a given emotion will be popular pictographs. Hiding their faces will make it easier for many people to move around freely – the participants in the workshop will feel less self-conscious. They should be encouraged to supplement the poses they have worked out with a sound layer: shouting; rhythm – in this way, it is possible to work together to build studies presenting situations engaging various types of emotions. Thanks to this, we can help young people discover the functioning of emotions as responses to stimuli from the environment, read the messages from the body, and recognize their own and other people's mental states – in a secure space, where they can be experienced openly and without evaluation[25].

25 Cf. Louise Hayes, Joseph Ciarrochi, *Trudny czas dojrzewania. Jak pomóc nastolatkom radzić sobie z emocjami, osiągać cele i budować więzi, stosując terapię akceptacji i zaangażowania oraz psychologię pozytywną*, trans. Sylwia Pikiel, Sopot 2019, p. 97.

Self-portraits

"I consist of a countless number of figures… A whole crowd coming from the depths of time… All of them are me…"[26] This is how Tadeusz Kantor described the inability to capture his own self, which he presented in his stage revue *Let Artists Perish* as several roles written out for different incarnations of one figure, coming from different periods of life. In a similar vein, the theme of passing was presented by Spanish photographer Jon Uriarte, who erased his own figure – no longer existing today, after all – from the photographs in his family album.

Every one of us is a witness to (and at the same time the main actor in) the passing and continual transformations of the self. Especially as in the twenty-first century – as never before – the number of self-images created nearly exceeds the possibilities of our perception. Paradoxically, however, compulsively recording every moment leads to a dilution rather than consolidation of the perceived identity.

A careful analysis of the self-image (What picture of myself do I wish to present to others? What do others think about me? To what extent am I prepared to reveal my private life? What do I refuse to reveal about myself?) is a good starting point from which to work on the conscious creation of contents to be published on social media platforms. This is especially important as teenagers' active life on the web can not only be a source of successes in social life but also lead to many disappointments, cyberbullying, emotional instability, and serious problems with self-esteem.

26 Translated from: Tadeusz Kantor, *Ja – w wielu postaciach*, a companion to the performance *Let artists perish* (Pol. *Niech sczezną artyści*).

Jon Uriarte, from the *Album* series, 2007. Courtesy of the artist.

No less important than building our self-image to be seen by others is the creation of our "internal self-portrait": that which defines us, attracts us, absorbs us, etc. Reflection on the question of "Who am I?" can start from a freeze-frame: an image of the person with their current appearance (facial features; height; figure; clothing). This does not have to be a photograph; the function can be successfully performed by a silhouette outline, to which elements and items significant for a particular person can be added in the course of the class, reflecting the world of the person's values, beliefs, and ideals. Specific parts of the body can be treated as "centres" of values: What is important to my heart? To my mind? To my body? What is a millstone round my neck? It is also possible to use a questionnaire in which the task is to complete sentences such as: "I cannot imagine the world without…," "The most important thing for me is…," and "I could not live without…"

Inspiration for the work can be provided by portraits or self-portraits by artists from different epochs. When considering various approaches to presenting the characteristics of figures, it is worth noting the difference between a self-portrait and a selfie, which lies in the different intentions behind them. A selfie is a kind of virtual diary, recording a special moment, an ingenious (and often amusing) outfit or situation, but – unlike a self-portrait – often hiding the true character of the person portrayed.

Let us remember that a person's appearance is only one of the points of reference. When creating portraits, we make references to favourite objects, places of play or meetings, ideas we subscribe to, and important fragments of the surroundings. It is also possible to create multimedia works – for example, in the form of spatial installations or boxes filled with symbolic objects defining individual personality; these can be supplemented with sounds, smells, and perhaps even tastes.

The city as a gallery

Art in the public space has always been with us. Ancient triumphal arches, statues of rulers and deities, thousands of ancient and modern buildings and monuments, fountains, mosaics, and today also posters, murals, light projections, artistic installations, and performances – all of these appear in the daily life of every passer-by. They can have many functions: decorating, commemorating, propagating ideas, building place identity, city branding, or simply serving as practical spatial landmarks. However, for a work of art exhibited in public space to reach the viewers' consciousness and attract their attention, favourable or otherwise, it needs something more: "in order to be noticed and accepted, it uses different tactics – it ingratiates itself, smiles, treads on the viewer's toes, or asks inconvenient questions"[27].

The key to creating interesting public art is its original message communicated in a thought-provoking and "eye-opening" form. Inspiring examples can be found in the works of street art masters, such as Banksy or Hamlet Zinkovsky, who creates in the cityscape of war-torn Kharkiv, while Daniel Rycharski's works are set in rural landscapes and contexts. Artistic interventions in the public space offer an abundance of possibilities: In the very heart of New York, Olafur Eliasson installed waterfalls, which were meant to make the city's busily rushing inhabitants stop and reflect on the nature of time. David Černy's provocative sculptures comment humorously (and often scathingly) on the excessive seriousness of current social and political issues. Another artist, Paweł Althamer, frequently engages local people in

27 Translated from: Aleksandra Litorowicz, *Sztuka w przestrzeni publicznej*, in: *Sztukapubliczna.pl*, https://sztukapubliczna.pl/pl/sztuka-w-przestrzeni-publicznej/sztuka (accessed 28.03.2023).

his work on temporary projects (for example, for the windows of a block of flats with the light turned on or off to form a sign-slogan for a short time).

Apart from murals, popular in the context of work with young people, it is worth looking for alternative – not necessarily lasting – forms for works expressing their ideals in public space. It is possible to manifest these ideals by organizing flash mobs, inviting passers-by to an improvised one-day café, or projecting young people's photos or videos onto the museum wall.

Transforming public space does not have to mean physical interference in its tissue: if we have no possibility of transferring our ideas to real walls, we can create an alternative vision of space, presenting the graphic motifs, slogans, messages, and statements created by young people in a virtual form. Works based on realistic photographs of places are not doomed to invisibility; they can be successfully shown on social media in the form of virtual galleries or disseminated in the form of printed stickers and postcards.

ТВІЙ СВІТ
(ЯКЩО ВІН Є)
ХАРКІВ 20
ГАМЛЕТ

Hamlet Zinkovsky, *Your World (If There Is One) Matters*,
street art in Berdiansk, 2020.
Photo by Kyrylo Pelivanov, Wikimedia Commons

Remix

Many artists believe that originality is good for people… with short memories. The books we read, the films we watch, the music we listen to, and even the places we live in make up a kind of genealogy of ideas[28]. Their creative transformations, as long as they retain visible traces of and references to the original work, introduce us into the world of remix – often considered to be a hallmark of contemporary networked culture.

Adding a moustache over Mona Lisa's secretive smile or, say, placing her under a hairdryer may evoke mixed feelings. When a famous artist puts his signature on this kind of vision, we are usually willing to accept it as a recognized artistic transformation, but what if we create this kind of work ourselves? The key issue is this: which of these ideas and paintings are meaningful to us? The point, therefore, is not to imitate them but to use them creatively. By revisiting them we give them a new life, and by transforming them and adding our contributions to them we develop not only the work itself but also our mental horizons and imagination.

Apart from having purely creative potential, practical classes on remixing can make an interesting lesson in attentively observing works of art and together looking for answers to the question: "What do I actually see here?" If we are dealing with figurative representations, it will be a good exercise to come up with what the figures (or one selected figure) presented in the scene might be thinking or saying – and place that in cartoon bubbles. What do the figures' gestures and facial expressions suggest? What relations and tensions can we observe and feel? The class can be divided into groups of a few students, with each group preparing the "lines" for a specific figure presented

28 Cf. *Steal like an artist: Austin Kleon at TEDxKC*, http://bitly.pl/hHcmy (accessed 28.03.2023).

Maciej Bohdanowicz, *Lviv (formerly Lwów and Lemberg), Wały Hetmańskie Avenue, ca. 1915*, from the series titled *Imitation of Truth. Or Isn't It?,* 2015, POLONA/BLOG

in the chosen painting or sculpture. Next, as a class, the adolescents will consider in what way, if at all, the interpreted scene and its message could be presented today. Which elements of the representation would we like to improve or remove, and what elements would we like to add? How should the existing painting be transformed to express something of significance today?

For this kind of workshop, it is possible to use printed reproductions for the working groups to transform by means of felt-tips, paints, and newspaper cuttings. Let us search through art for figures and scenes that could become the faces of an ecological campaign, the human rights movement, fashion trends, or national pride. When transforming and remixing an existing work of art, we may carefully examine its structure, see how it is made, and go behind the scenes of the painter's workshop, as it were. Paradoxically, transforming a work allows us to look at it more closely. It is an exercise in thoughtful looking.

Corporeality

We all know that the canons of beauty are changeable. However, it is worth remembering that, even though some types of figures, facial features, and "stylizations" of appearance may seem to be very popular especially in paintings or sculptures of a particular epoch, they are an outcome of a certain aestheticization of reality: presentations of idealized notions about the human body. Dressing ancient classical statues in outfits typical of contemporary hipsters, Léo Caillard convincingly demonstrated how the cultural background can disturb our sense of distance from the figures of former centuries.

Although contemporary culture is frequently preoccupied with the topic of the human body, it is mainly focused on visual perception; little attention is devoted to the experience of corporeality. The humanist motto "nothing human is alien to me" – readily cited in the educational context as expressing an affirmation of mind–body coexistence – becomes problematic when applied to the issue of experiencing our physicality.

It is worth raising the subject of corporeality with young people, drawing inspiration from the activities of body artists, who treat exploring the relationship between their physical and mental spheres as a source of self-knowledge. Performances by the artistic duo of Marina Abramović and Ulay, as well as experiments "extending" the body proposed by Stelarc, Orlan, and Neil Harbisson, inspire reflection on the experience of oneself – as a "living object," capable of engaging in self-exploration "from outside" and of perceiving and deeply experiencing one's own physicality "from inside."

Following their footsteps, we can explore our (multi)sensory experience of the surrounding reality. How does our body – and, through the body, also

our mind – respond to various stimuli? How does our perception of time change when we make sudden movements in quick succession or when we relax to the sounds of soothing music? How are we affected by sun rays or rain drops falling on the skin? What is the source of awkwardness and discomfort when the boundary of our personal space has been disrespected? Another option is to explore the surroundings with one of the senses excluded (feeling the textures, shapes, and temperature of various objects blindfolded; dancing with sound-muffling headphones on; eating in complete darkness). The results of the common explorations should be not only discussed but also arranged into a kind of performative exercises – during their presentation, the audience can be invited to join the proposed activities.

Let us not be deceived by the culture of images: one of the ways to get to know the human body is to experience it[29].

29 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia percepcji*, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska, Jacek Migasiński, Warsaw 2001, p. 256.

Léo Caillard, *Hipster in Stone III*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

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