

Krzysztof J. Szmidt* 

Outstanding Artists as Educational Models – the Dilemma of the Pedagogy of Abilities

Abstract

The aim of the article is to discuss a serious problem in the pedagogy of abilities, related to presenting specific patterns and models of an outstanding artist to the pupils as types that determine the directions of personal development. In the first part, the author briefly describes the differences between the model and the personal pattern, grounded in pedagogy and sociology, and then moves on to a synthetic description of the main features of the outstanding artist's model, derived from empirical research. Against this background, he presents his own concept of a pattern of creative attitude, which he considers worth promoting in the education of gifted children. The difficult dilemma of the lack of correspondence between outstanding works and the character of outstanding artists is illustrated with the example of two personal anti-models: the composer and murderer Gesualdo da Venosa, and the writer and denunciator Henryk Worcell. In the conclusion, the author suggests not to separate considerations about outstanding creativity from the qualities of the character of a given artist, and to treat these phenomena as an integral in the gifted education area. Lastly, the author formulates several questions for further research in this field.

Keywords: eminent creativity, personal models, creative attitude, pedagogy of ability.

Wybitni twórcy jako wzory wychowawcze – dylemat pedagogiki zdolności

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie poważnego problemu pedagogiki zdolności, związanego ze stawianiem przed wychowankami określonych wzorów i wzorców wybitnego twórcy jako modelu rozwoju osobowego. W pierwszej części autor krótko

* University of Lodz.

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opisuje różnice pomiędzy wzorem a wzorcem osobowym, ugruntowane w pedagogice i socjologii, a następnie przechodzi do syntetycznego opisu głównych cech wzoru wybitnego twórcy, wywiedzionego z badań empirycznych. Na tym tle przedstawia własną koncepcję wzorca postawy twórczej, godnego – jak sądzi – promowania w edukacji dzieci zdolnych. Trudny dylemat często spotykanego braku korespondencji pomiędzy wybitną twórczością a charakterem wybitnych twórców ilustruje na przykładzie dwóch antywzorów osobowych: kompozytora-mordercy Gesualda da Venosy oraz pisarza-donosiciela Henryka Worcella. W zakończeniu autor postuluje, by w edukacji osób zdolnych nie oddzielać rozważań o wybitnej twórczości od przymiotów charakteru danego twórcy i traktować te zjawiska jako integralny byt, a następnie formułuje kilka pytań do dalszych badań z tego zakresu.

Słowa kluczowe: twórcy wybitni, wzory osobowe, postawy twórcze, pedagogika zdolności.

Can we, or should we separate an artist from a person?
Is art an autonomous discipline that should not be influenced
by biographical facts or an artist's personality?

Anna Gadt¹

Introduction

Both the pedagogy of creativity and the pedagogy of abilities have a major problem with regarding outstanding artists as ideals or models – figures who can be considered as model personality types for younger pupils to compare themselves with, and who would set the standards (the canon) for personal development. To put it in different terms, it is difficult to perceive many of them as actual models of development worth following. So why is it such a common occurrence, and why is it a problem for the pedagogy of abilities? Before I attempt to provide an answer – at least partial – it is worth to begin by highlighting a situation that often happens among students of the pedagogy of creativity and abilities. When encouraged to self-educate and broaden their knowledge about outstanding artists, their creative processes and achievements, students turn to the study of the biographies of painters, writers, architects, musicians and other geniuses, from which they quickly learn that these public figures very often were not examples of the nobility of character, nor did they lead an exemplary life. For instance, an admirer of painting learns that in his youth, Marc Chagall (1887–1985) denounced to the tsarist authorities on his rebellious and revolutionary friends, many of whom would be later sent to Siberia. A student fascinated with the short stories written by Ireneusz Iredyński (1939–1985) reads an interview with members of his family, and discovers that the author (who died at a relatively young age), who struggled with alcoholism, often fell into conflict with many close relatives as well as the

¹ Anna Gadt – jazz singer, composer, pedagogue, speaking about the renaissance Italian composer Gesualdo da Venosa, prince of Venosa, and murderer of his wife and her lover, in the interview: Gregorczyk (2021: 40).

police, and revolted many others. A professional journalist, who is an admirer of the works of Stanisław Lem (1921–2006), is finally granted an interview with the author of *Solaris*, which takes place in the last year before the literary master's death – and hears only complaints, sarcastic and vicious comments about other authors, grim prognoses on the future of civilization – he encounters a mean, disillusioned old man, and not a genius prophet. A female student of pedagogy is surprised when she reads that the remarkable pedagogue Jean-Jacques Rousseau sent his five children to an orphanage because they interfered with his creative career;² and the singer Kora Jackowska, who died in 2018, ordered a plot of drugs by mail and later explained to the press that “it was for the dog.” My MA students, when writing their dissertations on particular artists, experience cognitive shock when they learn that their favorite music icons – such as Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Whitney Houston or Kurt Cobain – were in fact aggressive drug users, alcoholics, and dysfunctional parents or life partners. These and other cases raise questions for pedagogical discussion, whenever we ask about the relation between the value of creativity and the role of the artist.

Models, patterns, ideals of education

It will not be an exaggeration to say that since its inception, when pedagogy was constituted as a system of knowledge on education, it was interested in, studied, and promoted certain idealized ways of living, as well as a certain type of character considered as exemplary for younger generations. Pedagogy made them role models to which the pupil could refer their own conduct, knowledge, skills and complex character traits. A model (ideal) emphasized perfection and personal integrity (Kotarbiński 1957).

Models, patterns, ideals, ideal types – these concepts characterizing a perfect person were used in pedagogical literature across centuries. Although there are many disputes on how to precisely understand them, it is generally agreed on to distinguish between “a model” and “a pattern.” Ewa Wysocka writes that in pedagogy:

[a personal model] can be defined by a superior notion of educational ideal, understood in most general terms as the highest goal of education, to which other goals, the content and methods of educational work, should be subordinated, as well as the entirety of goals regulating the educational practice and specifically the personal model characterizing the desired features from the point of view of educational goals (Wysocka 2008: 628).

Thus, a specific personal model is the result of an educational ideal, whose characteristic traits determine the goal of education. In some sense, it is an ideal model of a member of a given social group – as it was acknowledged especially by sociologists (Kłoskowska 1962, Ossowska 2000, Znaniecki 2001) – defined by a set of norms and

² In his bestselling book Jordan Peterson (2018: 156) writes about it in the following manner: “Rousseau was a fervent believer in the corrupting influence of human society and private ownership alike. He claimed that nothing was so gentle and wonderful as man in his pre-civilized state. At precisely the same time, noting his inability as a father, he abandoned five of his children to the tender and fatal mercies of the orphanages of the time.”

ideas connected to particular social roles – it can be considered as “an idea about a set of characteristics to which a member of a society aspires to, wanting to be in harmony with either the postulated, or actually governing system of value” (Wysocka 2008: 628).

Models are assigned different meanings – in pedagogy, they function as signposts for the direction of educational work, that is, a vision of personality, as well as physical, cognitive (mental), social, cultural, and spiritual (and other) traits that are desirable and worth achieving in the course of formal and informal education. It is an important normative function of models, defining the norms of behavior, rules of morality, and even beliefs or ways of thinking valued at the time by particular social groups, and society at large. Therefore, the personal model of the creator (artist) should contain a description of such character traits and behaviors, whose achievement by pupils is perceived as the anticipated goal of the work done by pedagogues of abilities and creativity.

There are significant differences between patterns of postulated reality and models of reality. This difference was skillfully outlined by Aleksander Kamiński, and later adopted by representatives of social pedagogy and other subdisciplines in pedagogy (Kamiński 1975, Marynowicz-Hetka 2006). Without going into details, it can be said that the pattern is:

a structure reproducing either the regularity of actual human behavior, or the regularity of actual functioning of a given institution, [whereas a model is] a theoretical structure [...] constructed from desirable features of human behavior or from desirable forms and ways of functioning of an institution (Kamiński 1975: 63).

The components of the pattern are generally averages and medians of specific countable features, taken from empirical studies, whereas the components of models are norms (of quantity, quality, value of a given component). How to define them is a topic for another article. According to this understanding, a pattern of an artist is a set of features characterizing real-life, active representatives of different domains of creativity, whereas the model of an artist (a gifted person) – is a postulated and desirable personal model, which is worth striving to achieve.

It is also worth mentioning that there have been many classifications of personal patterns and models in the social sciences, created by the already mentioned, outstanding scholars such as Maria Ossowska, Antonina Kłoskowska, Florian Znaniecki.

A pattern and a model of an artist

The features of a pattern of an artist (a particularly gifted person) emerge from numerous studies on the personalities of talented artists from different fields (art, science, technology, social innovations etc.), conducted by psychologists of creativity and abilities – and psychologists were also responsible for describing and explaining, in hundreds of publications, the different shades of character of these outstanding figures. This perspective on studies of creative abilities – genius approach – domi-

nated for many years in the psychology of creativity and abilities, although – as Keith Sawyer (2012) argues – it did not lead to the formulation of particularly rich patterns of artists’ personalities, instead concentrating too much on the inner workings of their functioning, thus ignoring the socio-cultural context of their activity. Despite many disputes in literature on the importance of particular features of the personality model of artists, it was possible to articulate a rather stable set of features of real-life artists, both those ordinary and those considered outstanding. The following list of cognitive, motivational, and behavioral traits characteristic of creators (repeated in many other classifications) can be reproduced (Dacey, Lennon 1998; Boden 2004; Feist 2010, 2017, 2019; Nęcka 2001; Runco 2014; Kaufman, Gregoire 2015; Simonton 2018, Hofman, Ivcevic, Feist 2021; Popek 2001; Limont 2010; Pufal-Struzik 2006; 2015, Strzałecki 2003; Szmidski 2021; Tokarz 2005):

Table 1. Basic features of a pattern of an artist derived from empirical studies

Mental features (cognitive)	Emotional and motivational features	Behavioral features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive curiosity and ability to discover and formulate new questions (problems) – questioning-type of thinking • openness to new information coming from multiple sources • recognizing possibility for change and innovation • using intuition and wishful thinking • flexible, original thinking – high rates of divergent thinking • lack of cognitive schemas • connecting disparate associations when searching for new solutions • metaphorical and symbolic thinking • tolerating contradictions and ambiguities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mindfulness • courage in searching for original solutions • taking reasonable risk • independence from others, non-conformity • transgressing social norms and ethical rules in a given discipline or environment • passion, tenacity, persistence in the creative process • ability to hold off gratification; • sense of freedom in the creative process • preference for chaos and disorder • freedom from gender stereotypes • naivety and childlike spontaneity; • love of fun • vulnerability • rebelliousness • anhedonia • social isolation, loneliness • lack of self-censorship • pride and high self-esteem • domination and aggression • impulsiveness • emotional coldness • narcissism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engagement in creative work • outstanding productivity – creating multiple works • ability to persuade others • leadership skills • ability to work in and lead creative teams • using heuristic methods in everyday work • self-promoting • desire to shock and bewilder • manipulating others, frauds

Source: own study.

As the table demonstrates, many of these features are seen as positive by the social environment and teachers (e.g. engagement in creative work, persistence, leadership skills, originality, cognitive curiosity), however, many others are considered negative “properties” of artists (narcissism, aggressiveness, violation of social rules, dominating over others, anhedonia, desire to shock etc.). It is very doubtful that pedagogues would wish to promote such features of an artist, or encourage students to develop them. It is different when it comes to the model of the artist – the ideal type of the creator.

For many years I have been promoting a pedagogically positive pattern of an alumnus with a developed creative attitude which is based on my own empirical studies in schools and cultural institutions, and also refers to the legacy of social pedagogy and the concepts of active attitudes, as well as to psychology and humanistic pedagogy and the emerging field of positive psychology and pedagogy (Szmidt 1995; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; 2013a; 2013b). Interestingly, the conception of this patterns was not influenced in any way by the many real-life and postulated models of the artist as a person and creator which have been developed for centuries (Gołaszewska 1973; Golka 2008).

Here are the features of this pattern:

Table 2. The pattern of the artist as a positive pedagogical model

Features of the cognitive sphere – creative thinking	Features of the emotional and motivational sphere – penchant for novelty and bravery	Features of the active sphere – resourcefulness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perceptivity and cognitive curiosity, ability to marvel at something • ability to discover, formulate and redefine questions and problems – questioning-type thinking • sensitivity, acuteness, ability to question • flexible, original thinking • openness to new information, avoiding labelling • broad and in-depth interests extending outside of a given discipline • rich creative imagination • ability to use intuition and flashes of inspiration • ability to construct metaphors, to use analogies and similarities, to transform information and images, connecting distant associations • ease of learning new content, good memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interest in problems, love of novelty (neophilia) • lack of fear of novelty and fear of the unknown (neophobia) • ability to hold off gratification and prizes • creative courage, desire for taking reasonable risk • consequence, tenacity, verve – passion • facing the same problems despite failures (perseveration) • ability to be constructively alone • independence from others, non-conformity, lack of fear of being judged and of authority figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diligence, devotion, tenacity • ability to cooperate in groups and teams • resourcefulness – efficiency in situations of risk and shortage of resources • openness to creative transformations • sociality – desire to work for and with others • ability to implement new solutions and convince others – being innovative

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflexive reception, selection and use of information • ability to reflect on one’s own thinking and distancing from it – wisdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a kind, benevolent sense of humor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to use rules and heuristic techniques in practical situations (creative problem solving)
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Source: own study (based on: Szmids 2019; 2021).

As we can see, the pattern omits features that are considered negative – it is an axiologically positive pattern, constructed in this way for the purpose of formulating positive educational goals for gifted and creative students. I believe it is important to inspire, encourage, and develop these features and competences in students – it is worth making them the object of assistance in the creative process, which in my view is the essence of the practical dimension of the pedagogy of creativity and abilities.

Personal anti-patterns of an artist

It is crucial to emphasize, as strongly as Maria Ossowska did (2000), that there are also personal anti-patterns. A personal anti-pattern is a person whose features are the object of reluctance and even disgust felt by social groups, and the reaction is usually to reject this figure as a model of inspiration in personal development. According to this understanding, a personal anti-pattern of an artist (a gifted person) is a person who evokes negative emotions and thoughts, becoming an object of repulsion (Wysocka 2008: 629). Indeed, it would be difficult to consider such artists – who are described in the following pages – as Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa, Henryk Worcell, and many others (to mention only the murderer Caravaggio, the informer Jerzy Zawieyski, and the drug-addicted Amy Winehouse) as representing a model of successful development. The difficulty of how to evaluate this role is evidenced by the figures of the brilliant composer and the exceptional writer.

Gesualdo da Venosa

“Gesualdo, prince of Venosa, holds a special place in the history of music. He was both a composer and a murderer” – fittingly write Max Wade-Matthews and Wendy Thomson (2007: 283). He was born around the year 1561, probably in Naples, and died in 1613 in his ancestral castle in Gesualdo. He was part of an aristocratic family living in Naples, his mother was a niece of the Pope Pius IV, his uncle – the archbishop of Naples, and he inherited the title of the prince of Venosa from his father (Pamuła 1987: 286–288).

Historians of music maintain that he did not receive formal music education, but grew up surrounded by music and art. His father was interested in the fine arts, especially in music, and he kept a group of musicians in his house, some of whom became his son’s first teachers. In 1586 Carlo married Maria d’Avalos, his cousin renowned

for her beauty, who was already twice a widow, so he had to receive a dispensation from the pope to marry her. Two years later, on October 16, Carlo murdered his wife and her lover, the prince of Andria – Fabrizio Carafa. His biographers note that the murder was planned in cold blood and there were many witnesses among the prince’s servants (Knowles 2013). It was also particularly brutal: it is said that prince Carafa was shot, while Maria d’Avalos was stabbed twenty eight times with a knife or sword. These murders sparked a wave of indignation; Carlo was forced to relocate to his country manor, but was never judged or sentenced for his crimes. He later traveled around Italy, forming relationships with other musicians and finding inspiration for his own work, especially during his two years-long stay in Ferrara. He remarried in 1594, this time with Leonora d’Este, a relative of the prince of Ferrara, and after the death of his only son, he began to isolate from people and the rest of the world. The biographers of this tragic figure emphasize that:

One of his contemporaries, the genealogist Don Ferrante della Marra wrote that during his last years, the prince was haunted by inner demons. When music ceased to bring relief to his soul, Gesualdo da Venosa would drown his remorse in physical pain. He paid a dozen of his servants to brutally beat him up three times a day. It is said that during these “sessions,” he would smile with bliss. He also had another servant spend the nights in his bedroom making sure that his wounds would remain open and warm. So the composer was not convicted by the court for his crimes, but found a way to punish himself (Paluch 2013).

Wade-Matthews and Thomson write that “he died a lonely, bitter and half-mad man” (2007: 283).

The work of Gesualdo da Venosa secured him a permanent place in the history of music, especially the six volumes of madrigals “whose lyrics are most often filled with pain (there are a lot of references to suffering, death, and sadness)” (Wade-Matthews and Thomson 2007: 283). Apart from madrigals, his output included: two collections of motets and 27 responsories for the Holy Week, i.e. vocal music. Critics specifically highlight the exceptional expressiveness of the interpretations of poetic texts and original chromatics rarely used in renaissance music. Ahead of his time, he gave up the restraint of feelings or simplicity, and initiated a truly baroque, rich change of musical expression (Pamuła 1987: 208). It strongly influenced 20th century composers, particularly Igor Strawinsky, who was responsible for the renewed interest in Gesualdo da Venosa, as he often referred to the works of the composer-murderer (Knowles 2015). There is no doubt that Gesualdo da Venosa was a groundbreaking artist, a musically gifted person who was over 400 years ahead of his times, and his life would become an inspiration for many later works. And so the German director Werner Herzog’s film *Gesualdo: Death for Five Voices* (1995) is based on his life, as well as local legends and – to a great extent – stories he made up himself. The opera *Maria d’Avalos* (1992) presented the story of his wife’s and her lover’s murders, and was composed by the descendant of the title character, the Duke of Naples – Francesca d’Avalos. The tragic story was also depicted in another opera – *Luci mie traditrici*

(1988) by Salvatore Sciarrina. Today we can state with certainty that the great composer was suffering from a mental illness.

Katarzyna Paluch (2013), unconsciously answering the question posed by Anna Gadt in the opening motto to this article, writes:

Certainly, learning about the second life of the Italian madrigalist will change the way in which we experience his beautiful five-voice compositions. [...] It is hard to believe that a person gifted with such an enormous talent and musical taste would prove to be a ruthless killer with masochistic tendencies. In all certainty, Gesualdo da Venosa – “the Italian Dracula” – was a dangerous psychopath. But he went down in history as... an outstanding madrigalist.

Henryk Worcell (1909-1982)

Henryk Worcell, whose real name was Tadeusz Kurtyka, is one of the many Polish artists who – according to the documents of the Institute of National Remembrance (Ligarski 2008) – collaborated with the communist Secret Services, providing information on his colleagues: other artists, relatives, neighbors, and collaborators. A careful reader will find on this list such outstanding figures as theater director Henryk Tomaszewski, the founder of the Wrocław Pantomime Theatre, Marek Piwowski, the director of *The Cruise (Rejs, 1970)*, the excellent literary critic Wacław Sadowski, the renowned essayist and writer Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, the music critic and impresario Roman Waschko, and a number of brilliant writers: Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Eugeniusz Kabatc, Andrzej Brycht, Henryk Worcell (Ligarski 2008).

Worcell was born in a peasant family in 1909 in the village Krzyż, close to Tarnów. He did not finish middle school, and escaped to Kraków when he was 16 years old, where he worked as a dishwasher, and later as a waiter in the local Grand Hotel. Perhaps these experiences became the basis of his first and most famous novel *Zakłęte rewiry*, which was brilliantly adapted in 1975 by Janusz Majewski. He began writing, convinced by another writer – Michał Choromański, and after the success of *Zakłęte rewiry*, Worcell moved to Zakopane where he met other artists: Kornel Makuszyński, Zofia Nałkowska, Witkacy, Władysław Broniewski. During the Second World War he was a forced laborer in the German Reich, and after liberation he settled in the Recovered Territories (around Łądek Zdrój) and took up farming. He wrote and published short stories, reportages, and the famous novel *Odwet*, published in episodes in the magazine “Odra” (1947–48). He worked as a librarian in Trzebieszowice, but after a conflict with the locals and after losing an eye, he moved to Wrocław, where he lived until his death in 1982.³ He was the president of the Wrocław branch of the Polish Writers’ Union, and from 1949 a secret collaborator of the Secret Service, working

³ Other novels include: *Parafianie* (1960), *Najtrudniejszy język świata* (1965), *Pan z prowincji* (1973), *Wpisani w Giewont* (1974), *Inne rewiry* (1979), *Czyja jest moja żona?* (1979), *Dzieła wybrane*, t. 1–3 (1979). The book *O czym rzeka szepcze z deszczem* was published after his death in 1989.

under the pseudonym “Konar” (Kaczorowska 2008). The author of an article about the writer-informer characterizes his actions as follows:

He was jealous of other writers who received scholarships and travelled to foreign countries, and he was particularly hurt when during a meeting of the Wrocław branch of the Polish Writers’ Union in 1966, he was nominated for a State Award, although it was ultimately decided that the Odra Award would suffice, and the union nominated Tymoteusz Karpowicz for the State Award. In 1968 Worcell became the president of the Wrocław branch of the PWU. He held the position for three years. He informed the Secret Service about scholarships received by others, about who applied for foreign visits, often also commenting negatively on these attempts, handed over a handwritten list with names, addresses, telephone numbers, and sometimes with a short description of artists gathered around the Youth Circle of the PWU (Kaczorowska 2008).

Krzysztof Masłoń, a literary critic and researcher of the biographies of writers-informers, characterizes Worcell as follows:

It seems that he was often motivated by envy of his surroundings, as he felt slighted by some writers, and was jealous of their foreign trips and scholarships. He regretted not being nominated for the State Award of the USSR, and had to content with lesser prizes. He was primitive in his opinions, and he would destroy those artists he did not understand, although fortunately his opportunities were limited⁴ (Masłoń 2018).

He was particularly irritated by the young and brilliant poet, Rafał Wojaczek:

This talented poet acts entirely like a hoodlum, is a notorious drinker who when intoxicated hurts others by throwing glasses and ashtrays at them [...] – informed “Konar” (Kaczorowska 2008).

He appealed to the Secret Service authorities, asking them to finally do something with “this dangerous guy.” Two month later Wojaczek committed suicide. In January 1982, Worcell’s statement in support of the introduction of martial law was broadcast. He collaborated with the Secret Service between 1949–1955 and 1964–1973, until it was decided he was no longer useful.

What kind of benefits did Henryk Worcell, as well as other artists, receive from their collaboration with the secret communist services? Sebastian Ligarski provides an answer:

The employees of the ministry gave their OZI [Personal Sources of Information – K. J. Sz] who came from artistic circles different favors: attempts to exempt from criminal liability (Tomaszewski), getting back their driver’s license after being caught driving while under the influence (Damięcki), making it easier to start one’s career (Isakiewicz), and improving their life conditions (Worcell). They were also awarded with the chance to publish and travel abroad. The notorious passport was a deciding factor. In each

⁴ For more on the writer’s denunciatory activities, see: Krajewska (2007).

case. Another type of award was making it harder for competitors: in terms of their careers, fame, money, popularity. They shined, whereas their adversaries, often close friends or colleagues, experienced failures, successive problems in their lives, forcing them to emigrate with a sense of defeat (Karpowicz), not knowing who and in what ways was responsible for their dire situation⁵ (Ligarski 2008).

On the other hand, despite numerous attempts at being recruited by the Secret Service, such outstanding writers as Melchior Wańkiewicz, Paweł Jasienica or Jerzy Szaniawski did not succumb and were harassed almost throughout their entire careers (Klecel 2016).

These are but two selected personal anti-patterns of outstanding artists: an Artist-Murderer (Gesualdo da Venosa) and an Artist-Informer (Henryk Worcell). We can expand this list also with figures mentioned by Richard Brower (1999: 443–448):

- Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) – famous German director who worshiped Hitler and the birth of fascism;
- Edward Dmytryk (1908–1999) – American film director, supporter and propagator of communism;
- Emma Goldman (1869–1940) – American writer and anarchist;
- Lewis Carroll (1832–1918) – famous author of *Alice in Wonderland*, who photographed naked girls;
- Egon Schiele (1890–1918) – painter who was arrested for painting naked girls.

The problem and an attempt at resolving it

Paul Johnson, the prominent historian of ideas, writes:

Many people find it hard to accept that a great writer, painter, or musician can be evil. But the historical evidence shows, again and again, that evil and creative genius can exist side by side in the same person. It is rare indeed for the evil side of a creator to be so all-pervasive as it was in Picasso, who seems to have been without redeeming qualities of any kind (Johnson 2006: 256–257).

Frequent disappointments accompanying our studies of the biographies of outstanding artists whose works we have been admiring for years – be it their inspirational Biblical paintings (Caravaggio), beautiful in their simplicity Church motets

⁵ Joanna Siedlecka (2015) writes about the writers' involvement with the Secret Service. The compliant stance of some brilliant Polish writers towards Stalin and the communist state is described by Piotr Kitrasiewicz (2021). Prior to this, Jacek Trznadel (1986) published a famous volume consisting of interviews with renowned writers, which presents the enslavement of Polish writers during the Stalin Period, characterized by Trznadel as "domestic disgrace." It is the state of writers bending under the pressure of the false, communist reality of those times. As a chronicler's duty, it should be mentioned that all these examples were and still are criticized by the supporters of the "thick line" in Polish politics, which means calling for forgetting past mistakes, distortions, and collaborations of often outstanding artists with the communist authorities.

(Gesualdo), or bold philosophical theories (Martin Heidegger) – have their essential cause in what I wish to call the discrepancy between the nobility of the work on the one hand, and the lack of nobility of the artist's character on the other. I believe this discrepancy is in turn the effect of a belief, still upheld by many admirers of art, but also critics, journalists or authors of biographies: a myth (stereotype) telling us that priceless (noble) works of art are created by noble artists. It is difficult for us to imagine – let us repeat this once more – that the author of the psalm *Miserere* performed during the Holy Week Mass, or the madrigal *Arde il mio cor, ed e si dolce il foco*, was a double murderer (Gesualdo), and the creator of paedocentrism in pedagogy, and the preacher of the beauty of children's nature, would in fact give away his children to an orphanage (Rousseau). The existence of this discrepancy provokes some scholars of creativity and abilities to clearly separate these two significant factors (aspects) of creativity and analyze them independently: the personal aspect (who the artist is) and the attributive aspect (what he or she creates, and values he or she promotes). However, it is worth asking: can a pedagogue of creativity and abilities categorically and responsibly expose such dichotomies? And give up researching and propagating the ideal of unity between creativity and the life of the artist?

Perhaps a pedagogue of abilities looks at, or should look at, an artist and his work in a slightly different way than a critic or art historian does, since they are generally not interested in the subtleties of an artist's character and behavior, but in the value of their work and the process of its creation. Without relying on too far-reaching generalizations which may hurt the latter, I would like to state that a pedagogue of abilities can look, and should look, in a more comprehensive, holistic, or systemic way, especially when he or she is a supporter of the socio-cultural conceptions of the development of abilities, which forces to consider the process in a wide context of the individual, the family, as well as social and cultural, and not solely from the perspective of an isolated genius. This approach also imposes on the educator the duty to anticipate whether a given artist and his work can become a factor that influences the developmental activities of students interested in a given field, therefore – an ideal model. A music critic or art historian does not have to consider such responsibilities, nor realize them in teaching, although if he or she is pedagogically sensitive, they might ask whether promoting the works of an evil artist can have negative educational effects.

Not to operate only on generalizations: when teaching students about the works and biography of the brilliant blind Polish pianist, Mieczysław Kosz, and encouraging them to study his problematic biography (Karpiński 2019) and the film about his life *Ikar. Legenda Mietka Kosza* directed by Maciej Pieprzyca (see: Pieprzyca 2019), I have to take into consideration that for some of the more sensitive students, the artist's struggles with alcohol, his antagonistic nature, fraternizing with antisocial and hooligan circles in Warsaw, or generally – his very difficult character and suicide death – will not serve as an incentive to develop their own talents, and certainly will not make them admirers of the troubled musician. I was already familiar with Mieczysław Kosz's music before reading these books and watching Pieprzyca's film, and

I liked it much more then, since I did not have to associate it with the negative aspects of the artist-drinker. Careful viewing of the biographical series about Agnieszka Osiecka entitled *Osiecka* (2020), based on a screenplay written by Maciej Wojtyszko, Maciej Karpiński and Henryka Królikowska-Wojtyszko, and directed by Robert Gliński and Michał Rosa, if it is indeed factually accurate, makes the pedagogue doubt whether to include her in the curriculum of the pedagogy of abilities addressed to young people, as the marvelous artist is presented as a bad mother, an alcoholic, and an erotomaniac? It is therefore a matter of pedagogical responsibility whether we should separate the works of a controversial writer, painter or composer from their personal character or their role as parents, partners, or members of a creative community, and thus write about them as entirely independent aspects of analysis? I believe we that should not separate, but treat them as two sides of the same phenomenon. Furthermore, I would like to postulate that even if we are fascinated with the works of some brilliant artist, we should still not close our eyes on his or her negative features as a person, and try to impartially present them to students working in the same or similar field of creativity. This means we should not hide from them neither Mozart's controversial taste for humor,⁶ nor the drinking problems and compliance of Krzysztof Komeda, or the denunciatory activities of Andrzej Szczypiorski. When admiring Johann Sebastian Bach's *Kunst der Fuge*, we should not fail to mention to students his proclivity for pettiness and conflict in relations with members of city councils, who were responsible for providing him with a job as a full-time musician and cantor. Naturally, their life then ceases to be exemplary, but nonetheless, their remarkable creativity still remains...

Therefore, in response to the dilemma articulated in Anna Gadt's question which opened this essay, I would like to answer: no, we cannot and should not separate the artist from the individual. Especially from a pedagogical point of view. It is still the same being – and if, as a result, they will no longer serve the roles of a model, so what? It is worth looking for other ideal types whose life and work remain in a noble unity.

Questions for further studies in the pedagogy of abilities

In my opinion, both media and authors of popular biographies of outstanding artists have a tendency to present their biographies in a clearly polarized way: either too idealized and polished, omitting any controversy, most often focusing solely on their work, whose value is supposed to justify any weaknesses of their character; or surrounded by an aura of sensation. On the one hand, it seems like a form of conspiracy aimed at forgiving media figures for their transgressions, including even violations of law and crimes (e.g. driving under the influence or without a valid driving license, rape of a minor, drug use and sale, violence towards family members etc.). A peda-

⁶ These were "fecal jokes," as can be determined from letters written by the genius composer. See: Mozart (2021).

gogue might be quite astonished to find out that a well-known journalist is acquitted by the court after running over an elderly person while under the influence of alcohol, while another is sentenced to pay a small sum of money after being caught driving without a valid driving licenses (for many years). Why should their actions be judged differently than an “ordinary” citizen’s? Why are we supposed to forgive their criminal actions? Because they are creative and exceptionally gifted?

This “reduced tariff” for popular and outstanding artists is most certainly a consequence, as James Kauhman argues (2011: 112–114), of the longstanding romantic myth of the eccentric artist who is excused by the rest of the non-creative society for their mistakes – mistakes that they in turn like to read about or watch with fascination. Mass culture is responsible for this reduced tariff for controversial artists. On the other hand – it has to be clearly stated – mass culture excessively inflates and publicizes their often insignificant lapses and mistakes, producing scandals only to catch the attention of new readers and viewers. Following Kaufman, we can ask: who is interested in the fate of shepherds or clerks working in a rehabilitation equipment store, and who in the arrest of Roman Polanski or Britney Spears’ fight for parental rights? But we might also ask cynically, as Wiesław Chełminiak did (2022: 41), and then reflect on the answer: “But since when are outstanding people both honest and sympathetic?”

This analysis does not exhaust all of the possible aspects of the problem. Future scholars of this dilemma will have to address other questions:

- Which artists can become a model (ideal) of the unity of noble life and valuable work? Such a model that would make it possible to present them as authority figures for creative children and adolescents, without the danger of committing a pedagogical mistake?
- Are these types of authority figures and models still necessary in the process of creative acculturation of the young generation at a time when masters and thinkers are becoming obsolete? What kinds of socializing and persuasive functions can they serve in the new millennium which privileges – both in theory and in educational practice – all types of emancipatory movements and constructing one’s own inimitable personal identity by everyone, instead of following a biographical trail? What are the roles of educational models today?
- What kinds of partners, husbands or partners were outstanding creators for their children, wives and partners? Were Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Albert Einstein, Artur Rubinstein, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Tamara de Łemicka and Agnieszka Osiecka good parents?
- How to deal with students experiencing cognitive shock after having learned about the controversial, and sometime even criminal and anti-social episodes in the lives of cherished artists? How to talk about it, and what type of approach is most helpful?
- Is there a danger that the young generation will not “insert” representatives of popular and mass culture in the place of the artist’s positive role models, for instance celebrities with the largest number of “likes,” seasonal idols and narcissistic

creators of banalities? Kinga Głyk or Karol Friz Wiśniewski from the Ekipa group? Will they determine the level and content of young people's aspirations in life?

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About the Author

Krzysztof J. Szmidt – pedagog, profesor nauk społecznych i profesor zwyczajny UŁ, kierownik Katedry Edukacji Artystycznej i Pedagogiki Twórczości. Członek Sekcji Pedagogiki Sztuki Komitetu Nauk Pedagogicznych PAN. Autor wielu prac naukowych i metodycznych z zakresu wychowania do kreatywności i edukacji kulturalnej, w tym pierwszego w Polsce podręcznika akademickiego *Pedagogika twórczości* (2007; 2013). Współautor podręczników do lekcji twórczości *Porządek i Przygoda* i *Żywioły* oraz „kultowego” już projektu kształcenia zintegrowanego *Przygoda z klasą* (WSiP). Autor oryginalnej koncepcji pomocy w tworzeniu – treningu kreatywności (Eksploracje – Kombinacje – Transformacje), superwizor treningu twórczości Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Kreatywności, autor innowacyjnych podręczników do treningu kreatywności. Uczestniczką prowadzonego przez niego treningu twórczości była noblistka Olga Tokarczuk. Opiekun naukowy Szkoły Podstawowej „Pracownia” w Łodzi, realizującej model szkoły twórczej. Jego ostatnie książki to: *Edukacyjne uwarunkowania rozwoju kreatywności* (2017, Łódź, Wydawnictwo UŁ), *ABC kreatywności. Kontynuacje* (2019, Warszawa, Difin) (pierwszy tom *ABC kreatywności* ukazał się w 2010 r.), *Myślenie pyta. Teoria i kształcenie* (współaut. E. Płóciennik, 2020, Łódź, Wydawnictwo UŁ). Pomysłodawca i kierownik naukowy serii wydawniczej *Edukacja dla mądrości* (Wydawnictwo UŁ) oraz propagator pedagogiki pozytywnej.

Krzysztof J. Szmidt is a professor of social sciences at the University of Lodz, head of the Department of Artistic Education and Pedagogy of Creativity. Member of the Art Pedagogy Section of the Pedagogical Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Author of many scientific and educational works in the field of creativity and cultural education, including the first academic textbook in Poland, *Pedagogy of Creativity* (2007; 2013).

Co-author of textbooks for the lessons of creativity *Order and Adventure*, *Elements* and the “iconic” integrated education project *Adventure with the class* (WSiP). Author of the original concept of help in creating – creativity training (Explorations – Combinations – Transformations), supervisor of creativity training of the Polish Creativity Association, author of innovative textbooks for creativity training. Nobel Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk was a participant in his creative training. The tutor of the Primary School “Pracownia” in Łódź, which implements the model of a creative school. His recent publications include: *Educational conditions for the development of creativity* (2017, Łódź, UŁ Publishing House), *ABC of creativity. Continuations* (2019, Warszawa, Difin; the first volume, *ABC of creativity*, was published in 2010), *Questioning Thinking. Theory and education* (co-author: E. Płóciennik, 2020, Łódź, UŁ Publishing House). The creator and scientific director of the “Education for Wisdom” book series (UŁ Publishing House), and a promoter of positive pedagogy.

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