Detention in a prison is the isolation of an individual from society, placing him in an isolated space, where the punishment is not only the lack of contact with family or loved ones, but also being with other - often not easy in coexistence - prisoners. The reduced level of external stimuli makes internal life (experiences, emotions) a priority. Undertaking any creative activity reduces a prisoner’s concentration on the matter of isolation and any health problems and issues: real or imaginary. This process counteracts chaos and contributes to a gradual stabilization of the emotional system. Creative activity, by strengthening emotional stability, helps the regaining of balance and influences the prisoner’s adaptation to the life situation in which he finds himself. The initiation of creative activity by prisoners promotes the reintegration of the individual and social (here including cultural) self.

The first part of this article will explain why introducing the arts is not only desirable, but natural given the setting, and inmates’ propensity for creative expression. The next part will present the examples of unstructured and structured programs developed for the creative revalidation of prisoners. Studies have revealed that undertaking creative activity on the part of prisoners plays an important role in the process of revalidation. At the same time, analysis of works of art produced by prisoners gives an insight into the neuropsychological mechanisms of creation and provides important information for planning therapeutic programs.

**Key words:** creation, emotions, work of art, communication
INTRODUCTION

Prison detention is the isolation of an individual from society, placing the prisoner in an isolated space, where the punishment is not only the lack of contact with family or loved ones, but also being with other - often not easy in coexistence - prisoners. Cell life is monotonous, one day is similar to another. A lonely person in a cell experiences a variety of feelings: anxiety, fear and longing (Gajewski 2018). These feelings can generally be classified as emotional disorders of the self. The reduced level of external stimuli makes internal life (needs, emotions, and desires) a priority (Gussak 2004, 2006; Pachalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et. al 2010). Hence, it is quite often noted that such a situation unleashes creativity. This being clearly stated by what Einstein wrote:

The monotony of quiet life stimulates the mind to creativity. This lack of stimuli causes silence [...], causes the brain to stimulate itself, creating an inner world that is an alternative to unmet needs.

For the person caged in a small cramped enclosure paper, pencil, painting, carving utensils or musical instruments become the means to create a small, intimate and safe world. Moreover, it also makes it possible to express thoughts and feelings that cannot be said out loud. Accordingly, a strong need to express what hurts, what is missed and what is missing finds its expression in the creations produced. As has been pointed out in other works, the products of prisoners, though primitive and sometimes bulky, are quite often genuine pieces of art (Pąchalska, Bednarek, Kaczmarek 2020).

MAIN FEATURES OF CREATIVITY AND CREATION

Creativity is a universal and abstract human ability which has been defined in numerous ways; its most consensual definition conceptualizes it as an ability to yield products (e.g., ideas, stories, objects) that are both novel (i.e., original) and useful (Stein, 1953; Sternberg, Lubart, Kaufman, & Pretz, 2005). Cognitively, creativity has been defined as a higher order thinking ability involving analysis, evaluation and synthesis i.e., the creation of new knowledge (Sadana, Rajeswaran, Jain et al. 2017).

The main features of creativity – in all areas – are novelty, originality and innovation. Jason Brown (2017) emphasizes the value of novelty in creativity. It means that creativity brings something innovative, new and positive that goes beyond the familiar and accepted objects or events (Zaidel 2014). However, the novelty does not mean something entirely new but the essence of creativity is to reimagine and transform what already exists and is available to everyone. Hence, in works of art we can observe the discovery of previously unnoticed connections between presented components or a new approach to the reality
depicted there (Pachalska 2007). The task of creative thinking requires generating creative, an innovative look at common objects (e.g., the use of a metal tube). The new ideas are associated with both consciousness and imagination, while searching for possible alternatives requires a greater memory capacity, including semantic memory (Storm and Angello, 2010). Accordingly, Boden (2013) distinguishes the following types of creativity on the basis of its products:

- **psychological creation** (close in terms of subjective creativity) leads to creations new only for the author;
- **historical creation** (close to objective creativity), something which is new throughout history.

Another very important feature of creativity, is **functionality**, sometimes also called utility in its broadest sense. The result of creativity cannot be useless and it is difficult to imagine the situation of creating anything without - even vague and indefinite – an idea of the function of a new product (Brown 2017). This means that the effect of creative activity is to meet specific needs much better than existing ones, sometimes it can even evoke needs not previously known or felt. It has long been believed that all creativity is intended to multiply good (in the broadest sense) and prevent evil (Pachalska 2008; Williams, Lee, Hartig et al. 2018;). However, also creating seemingly useless things, if it adds a new thread to the resource of good things, promotes development, self-realization, well-being, and arouses pleasure in the creator. Creative activity is a way to develop a lifestyle based on self-creation and self-realization (Pachalska, Benarek & Kaczmarek 2020).

An equally important feature of creativity is **communication**. Kaczmarek (2012) argues that a symbolic communicative system is observed only in humans, and requires a high development of cognitive functions and abstract symbolic thinking. Following Dunbar (2009) he points out that symbolic thought appeared under the pressure of social environment due to a dramatic increase of group size. The bigger the size of the group the more complex become social interactions since an individual must take into account the vast number of possible reactions of each group member. The complexity of social interactions demanded equally complex forms of communication, and language proved to be most useful in this respect since it promoted cohesion and survival. Another important outcome of symbolic thinking is art. According to Luria (1976) the roots of creativity reach deep and go beyond communication and social contexts. He posits that the basic biological needs of hominids, the need to preserve physical energy and survival, the occurring threats (illness or death) can be the main motivators of innovation equally in art. Given the adaptive evolutionary processes, it is reasonable to assume that these needs have been woven into the brain’s creativity mechanisms in humans (Brown 2017). This means that there is a deep motivation to communicate through art, even if there is no linguistic communication after brain damage. In such neurological cases, the very transition to creation is innovative, but the final product is not necessarily a work of art (Pachalska 2007; Zaidel 2013).
THE ESSENCE OF A CREATIVE PROCESS

The creative process is a weave of unconscious and conscious dynamic states of mind, the essence of which is the artist’s search for “non-existent” objects, including signs and their meanings, followed by their processing and the final creation of the work. As stated by Pachalska, MacQueen & Brown (2012) the central property of an original act and the crux of creative thought is a departure from habit or expectancy. This could be construed as a suppression of repetition since each recurrence is minimally novel in comparison to its antecedents, in part due to changing sensibility, in part to fluctuations in the resting state. Incessant change is introduced along with continuity in the revival of mental states, in the growth of private experience and the passage of objects into the world. The continuity resolves the sameness of things with the novelty in their recurrence. Whether a thing changes rapidly – a film, an argument – or slowly – the self, a rock: the transition over moments is continuous. The paradox is that in spite of continuity, things exist as a single brain/mind state (epoch) of becoming with no gaps in experience or perceptible nature.¹ Things recur and each recurrence is novel though retaining ingredients of the prior single brain/mind state (epoch). The difference between exact iteration, novelty in passage and fresh renewal depends on more than a difference in succession since a world in continuous change is the main source of the disparity, and a self of moderate stability is the arbiter of sameness and difference (see also Brown 2017).

¹ Even in sleep or loss of consciousness there is felt a continuity of the self.

Fig. 1 Phases in working memory are generally revived in ensuing states in the order of their registration, i.e., in relation to their resemblance to the oncoming brain/mind state and, thus, their capacity for revival. Images closer to the current perception, i.e., those in short-term memory that almost achieve re-perception, are most likely to be revived in the current mental state. The brain/mind state at T-1 is replaced by an overlapping state at T-2. The core of T-1 is overlapped at T-2 before T-1 terminates, i.e., before the epoch exists. This explains the recurrence of early phases in T-1 associated with individuality, self, character, dispositions, long-term and experiential memory, and the “persistence” of core beliefs, values and personality. Later phases perish on completion of the entire state to make way for novel perceptions. The re-activation of earlier phases by the overlapping state explains the sustained personhood behind succession. Early phases are an ingredient across states, later ones are malleable to a greater extent as the endogenous process is shaped by sensation.

Source: Pachalska, MacQueen & Brown, 2012
In this context it is important to emphasize again that genuine change occurs in the actualization of the brain/mind state (epoch), and that apparent or illusory change occurs in the transition of one brain/mind state (epoch) to another. Genuine change is the becoming-into-being (existence) of an entity – the actualization of a sequence of categories - while apparent change is the progression from one brain/mind state (epoch) of being to another, namely, the observed and presumed causal sequence of events in the world. An epochal state is an instance of being that is dynamic, becoming, and is finished in its formation. The process of entity creation is completed in the actualization of an epoch of being (category, substance), which on achieving existence passes away in its replacement, while continuity depends on the overlap of epochs (Fig. 1).

The brain creates ideas based on insights. The duration of the image depends on a whole range of features, where emotions play the main role. Pleasant events are subjectively perceived as shorter (e.g., meeting with a friend), unpleasant events have a subjectively longer duration (e.g., waiting in the waiting room for a dental procedure). Thus, the event has a more or less arbitrary duration in a series of repetitive brain/mind (epoch) states. The exchange rate is probably constant for each unit. The dynamics of the brain/mind state are associated with changing objects and events, and with our attitude to them. The real change in the mind of the observer is imperceptible.

CREATIVE ACTIVITY OF PRISONERS

Creative activity of people being in the state of solitude are considered in terms of overloading the emotional system, disruption of the limbic system and the prefrontal area of the brain. Emotions are, after all, a subjective reaction to situations, perceived by the subject as significant, based on nervous and chemical reactions (Kropotov 2016). A common feature of the situation of prisoners is their long-term isolation from the outside world. From the assumptions of microgenetic theory (Pąchalska 2008), we know that an inmate assesses his situation and at the same time reacts to it on three levels:

1. **unconsciousness**, which includes the subcortical parts of the limbic system, including the amygdala and associated neuronal connection patterns;
2. **consciousness**, which engages the cortical parts of this system, that is, the medial region of the frontal lobes and the associated patterns of neuronal connections.
3. **meta-consciousness**, for which the dorsal-lateral parts of the frontal lobes are responsible and the patterns of neuronal connections related to them, enabling a person to be aware of his feelings and their impact on his current state, as well as the possible effects of decisions made in this state.

In the light of microgenetic theory, we can also consider the dynamics of personality changes and prisoner behavior, in which creativity can be included (Pąchalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et al. 2010). The brain is a complex dynamic system in which, under normal operating conditions, a balance is maintained between the individual processes and incoming stimuli. It enables the
maintaining of a balance in reaction to changes that take place in the environment of a given person. An extra-systemic event, such as the loss of a loved one, awaiting sentence, or detention in a prison, usually disturbs this balance, because the permissible limits of these changes are exceeded. This applies first of all to (though not only) the emotional system. Since the intensification of frustration leads to a destabilization of the patterns of neural networks, a chain reaction is released, which results in chaos and subsequent destabilization of the emotional system. As a consequence, changes or disturbances in behavior, destabilization of the self system and loss of identity will develop (Brown, 2000; Grochmal-Bach and Pąchalska 2004; Pąchalska, Kaczmarek and Kropotov 2020).

**SELECTED EXAMPLES OF PRISON ART**

The history of prison art is as long as the history of prison itself (Ursprung 1997). In the ruins of the ancient city of Pompeii, you can still see graffiti that gladiators drew on the walls of their cells waiting for death or victory in the arena. One of the oldest works of art created by prisoners dates from the time of Napoleon. They survived because prisoners sold them to guards in exchange for additional food and clothing (Kornfeld, 1997). It is also worthy to mention, that Napoleon himself created while being imprisoned in Nice as depicted in the most famous work of art painted by Edward Matthew Ward (Fig. 2).


2 This is one of the earliest of several history pieces relating to the period of the French Revolution painted by the artist throughout his career.
Archaeologists working on the site of an old prison in Pennsylvania (USA) found numerous prisoner crafts from 1829, including wooden toys, figurines, chess pieces, etc. Many prominent artists or writers created masterpieces behind bars, whether in the old closed facilities for the mentally ill, or in prison (Gussak 2006).

There is no shortage of academic reports on the phenomenon of prison art. Both François Villon and Oscar Wilde wrote excellent poems about their experiences in prison. Jean Genet, a writer, playwright and poet, also created his works in prison. Scholars were also interested in works of art created by such serial killers as Charles Manson or John Wayne Gacy. These works continue to intrigue and frighten researchers (Gussak 2006). In the subject literature you can find many descriptions of prison creativity from the last two centuries. Prisons and political programs often incarcerated prisoners for the political activities of leaders and ideologists of social and political movements. These include, for example, the works of Lenin, Bukharin, Sverdlov and other Russian revolutionaries. It is also intriguing that during his imprisonment in Landsberg after the Munich coup, Adolf Hitler also painted pictures. Moreover, he wrote the program book of Nazism - Mein Kampf. I will present some of these artists below.

**FRANÇOIS VILLON AS A PRISONER**

François Villon (around 1431-1463, real name François de Montcorbier), the most famous poet of the French Middle Ages and probably the greatest poet among criminals and adventurers. Villon, although an orphan, had excellent conditions for mental and moral development. He received a careful upbringing thanks to his tutor, Canon Guillaume de Villon, from whom he also took the name he was to subsequently use. Despite completing his studies at the Sorbonne and excellent prospects within the clergy or academia, he led an adventurous and hooligan lifestyle, falling into numerous conflicts with the law, including killings, which led to his frequent imprisonment and twice to the death sentence. Luckily for him, and for his literary works, the death sentence, was commuted to banishment by parliament on 5 January 1463. It is Villon’s most important work, *Le grand testament* [Eng. *The Great Testament*] (1461–1462), that was written after his release from the prison cell in which the waited for the death sentence. In *Le grand testament*, as in other works [e.g., the youthful Lais (Eng. *Legacy or Bequests*), Ballade des pendus [Eng. Ballad of the hanged], *Le Petit Testament* (Eng. *The Little Testament*) autobiographical threads illustrated with colorful pictures from the life of social outcasts, marked by debauchery, drunkenness, thieving and common crime are interwoven with reflection over the passage of time, the vanity of this world, and wit, irony, mockery and sensuality. They also praise the joy of life which, however, is intertwined with melancholy and the fear of an imminent death (Adamski 1966).

Villon was considered the first “cursed poet” (poète maudit). This term encompassed a group of French poets from the second half of the 19th century (Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Comte de
Lautréamont et al.). They all expressed both in their lifestyle and their creativity rebellion against society, against existing aesthetic tastes, and customs, because they could not find a place for themselves in it. In fact, the similarity of the “damned poets” and their numerous future followers to Villon is apparent. If Villon was in conflict with anything, it was not with the social order of late medieval France, but with himself, his temperament and his weaknesses, from which he drew the joy of life, with an internal tear and regret over his past and fear of the future. An expression of this fear can be noted in the Ballade des pendus [Eng. Ballad of the hanged], in which he foresees his inevitable end. At the same time, he begs his contemporaries for pity, mercy, prayers, and forgiveness.

**OSCAR WILDE AS A PRISONER**

During his imprisonment in Reading Prison (1895-1897) *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* was written by Oscar Wilde (Fig. 3). The ballad is considered one of the most beautiful works created by prisoners, and most critics are of the opinion that it is a classic in this genre (Gussak and Virshup 1997).

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde (born October 16, 1854 - died November 30, 1900) came from a fairly well-off Anglo-Irish family living in Dublin. His mother was an activist in the Irish independence movement. In his early youth Wilde left Ireland for England, where he made a literary career as an author of plays, novels, poetry and novels. He was known for his elegant and witty style of writing, full of irony and paradoxes. He was a zealous supporter of aestheticism in liter-
ature and art, or “art for art’s sake.” He strongly rejected the thesis that a literary text should obey some non-literary values, including moral or political ones. He was also known for his extravagant dress style, a rather frivolous lifestyle, and above all for his barely hidden homosexuality. It is worth adding that he lived in the Victorian era where you could have trouble in good company because of any misuse of language.

In 1895, Wilde filed a defamation case against an English aristocrat, the Marquis of Queensbury, who had publicly called him a “posing sodomite.” During the hearings Wilde argued that he was not a sodomite because he had never had anal intercourse, but he relied on Plato’s love models. He also argued that Shakespeare also loved younger boys, not necessarily physically though rather not just spiritually. As could be expected Wilde did not convince the court by his arguments, and shortly after the last trial he was arrested for having had sex with other men, which was a criminal act under the law at that time. After several trials, which ended without a sentence, he was finally sentenced to 2 years of hard labor, which was rebuked by many members of high society. An influential person even wrote in an open letter to the editor of one of the London newspapers:

“So why doesn’t the prosecution deal with all boarding school students or half of the students at universities?”

Wilde was serving a sentence initially in prison in Pentonville, later in Wandsworth Prison in London, and finally at Reading Prison, about 50 kilometers away from London. He received the number C.3.3., which he was ordered to use every day instead of his own name. Originally he did not even have access to paper, but later the rigors were slightly relaxed under the pressure of some influential people who considered the sentence to be barbaric. After all Wilde was at the peak of his popularity at the time, especially among theater lovers. While still in prison (1895-1897), he wrote a very long, 30,000-word letter monologue addressed to one of his lovers, Lord Alfred Douglas. Naturally, the letter was not allowed to be sent. He took it with him when he was released after the prison sentence was shortened in May 1897. This work was published as a brochure entitled *De Profundis* only after Wilde’s death in 1905 (in a censored version) and in 1949 in full.

Immediately after his release, Oscar Wilde wrote a poem called The Ballad of Reading Gaol, which became one of his most famous works. The inspiration to write this poem was Wilde’s traumatic experience relating to the execution (by hanging) of one of the prisoners, a former soldier who, in circumstances not fully explained, had murdered his wife and was sentenced to death. In England death sentences were to be carried out for a long time afterwards, but back in the days of Wilde intellectuals believed that, regardless of the cruelty of crimes, one cannot deprive a man of life in the majesty of law. The Ballad of Reading Gaol is a manifesto of the emerging movement to overthrow the death penalty (Pąchal-ska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et. al 2010).
Soon after his release, Oscar Wilde left England for Paris, where he lived in poverty for three years under the pseudonym Sebastian Melmoth. His wife changed her name to Constance Holland and left England with the children. On his deathbed, he converted to Catholicism. He is buried in a tomb designed by Jacob Epstein on Père-Lachaise. Today it is a place of worship for someone considered to be a symbol of gay martyrdom although he himself always strongly denied that he was a homosexual. He claimed to have sex in the style of Socrates, to whom he constantly compared himself and was disgusted with so-called “Buggery,” or anal intercourse.

THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL (1898)

The ballad is an unusual work in the creative output of Oscar Wilde. The reader of Oscar Wilde’s works was accustomed to a style in which the author carefully avoids feelings, or (even more often) mocks them, recognizing them as shallow sentimentality. In the novel The Picture of Dorian Gray or in the stage play The Importance of Being Earnest the main characters always speak out lofty and witty, with a penchant for paradoxes, most often shocking, in spite of moral conventions. The other characters, who treat various matters seriously, are exposed to mockery. An example of Wilde’s style and approach is the title of the play itself, which includes a witty play on words regarding the phrase “to be Earnest”. As an adjective (now rather outdated and quite rarely used) this expression means: “to be truthful, and honest” and contains a certain moral quality of particular importance for the ethos of the Victorian era. On the other hand, “Ernest” is also a male first name, and the art is about a man who must pretend to be “Ernest” to win the heart (and hand) of a young and quite rich girl. Spice is added by the fact that Ernest does not really exist. The main character, who does not enjoy a good reputation in elegant company because of his love of revelers and frolics, invents the fictitious brother Ernest as a walking pattern of all virtues. The fictitious brother Ernest thanks to his beautiful love letter to this young lady, makes her fall in love with him “in absentia”.

The somewhat abbreviated and simplified sketch of the plot of Oscar Wilde’s best-known art illustrates his ironic wit. The novel The Picture Dorian Gray is also full of wit and puns but includes also another depth, one quite gloomy and dramatic, almost in the spirit of Dostoevsky. Against this background, the tone and content of The Ballad of Reading Gaol is amazing. In this ballad from the first to the last word there is not only almost a deadly seriousness, but it also expresses strong emotions: despair, sadness, anger, and depression. The ballad describes a real, historical event, the execution of the aforementioned former soldier, Charles Thomas Wooldridge. The narrative presents the experiences of the ballad hero – sentenced to death – while showing the author’s extraordinary sensitivity, and emotional and cognitive empathy. The analysis of this song shows that this event stuck Wilde so strongly that all the ironic jokes, puns and distance to feelings, so characteristic of him in the previous period of his life, disappeared. The fact is that Wilde wrote little, almost nothing, after his release from prison,
so it can be concluded that his work has undergone a transformation. He lived carefree in Paris, wanted to have fun as before, but he was bothered by a lack of money. In consequence, he ceased to create something that often happens if the creator is in a bad mood.

**Selected fragments of The Ballad of Reading Gaol (1898)**

[...]

_He walked amongst the Trial Men_
_In a suit of shabby grey;_
_A cricket cap was on his head,_
_And his step seemed light and gay;_
_But I never saw a man who looked_
_So wistfully at the day._

_I never saw a man who looked_
_With such a wistful eye_
_Upon that little tent of blue_
_Which prisoners call the sky,_
_And at every drifting cloud that went_
_With sails of silver by._

_I walked, with other souls in pain,_
_Within another ring,_
_And was wondering if the man had done_
_A great or little thing,_
_When a voice behind me whispered low,_
_“That fellows got to swing.”_

[...]

_He did not wring his hands, as do_
_Those witless men who dare_
_To try to rear the changeling Hope_
_In the cave of black Despair:_
_He only looked upon the sun,_
_And drank the morning air._

_He did not wring his hands nor weep,_
_Nor did he peek or pine,_
_But he drank the air as though it held_
_Some healthful anodyne;_
_With open mouth he drank the sun_
_As though it had been wine!
And I and all the souls in pain,
Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.

[...]

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
We had crossed each other’s way:
But we made no sign, we said no word,
We had no word to say;
For we did not meet in the holy night,
But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men were we:
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out His care:
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

[...]

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill:
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill:
But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

[...]

The author in The Ballad does not “whisper” but uses a fairly simple, sometimes even coarse idiolect, quite different from Wilde’s style, one well known to his readers. The rhyme pattern is traditional, quite strong (e.g., a lot of rhymes in each stanza, rhymes often occur in a single line), appropriate for the notion of a “Ballad”. Rhymes and forms give the song a more folk character, which may sound strange in the ears of a reader accustomed to the work of Oscar Wilde. There is a supposition that Oscar Wild’s experiences in prison, which led him to a great trauma, resulted in a disintegration of the creative within his personality.
WILLIAM SYDNEY PORTER AS A PRISONER

William Sydney Porter (born September 11, 1862, died June 5, 1910) is an American writer, author of humorous stories, often ones with a surprising ending. In 1898 he was sentenced to five years imprisonment for embezzling money from the bank where he worked. After three years and three months, he was released for good behavior. In prison he found favorable conditions for writing. Being a pharmacist, he was well treated and spent a lot of time listening to prisoners stories and writing these down. In this way O. Henry’s first novel Whistling Dick’s Christmas Stocking was first published in his collection, Roads of Destiny (1909). After his debut as a writer Porter published a dozen other novels, none of which, however, were related to his prison experiences. He decided to cut himself off from his previous experience as a prisoner, which is reflected in his own words: “I will never talk about crime and punishment. I tell you that I will not try to cure the sick soul of society. And I forget that I once breathed air behind these walls” (Piotrowski 1989: 10). Yet many of his later works include descriptions of adventures told by the inmates of his stay in prison. They were included in the volume of short stories The Gentle Grafter (1908). This volume includes also the famous story “A Retrieved Reformation” based on an event that took place during his imprisonment. Since the socio-moral climate prevalent in the US of the second half of the nineteenth century did not allow the acceptance of the work of a prisoner, he published his stories under the pseudonym “O. Henry”. Since then those stories have become classics of American literature and the author’s name Henry is still given as an author in school textbooks. It should also be pointed out that Porter was one of the first American authors who focused on the fate of the poor, and socially excluded. The author does not try to justify the crime, neither his nor someone else’s, but he illustrates the operation of the “soulless” legal and justice system in the USA at the end of the 19th century (Pąchalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et al. 2010).

ADOLF HITLER AS A PRISONER

It might be of interest to note that one of the biggest criminals of the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler, also created works of art during his imprisonment in Landsberg. In 1923 he was still a rather marginal figure on the German political scene. He organized and initiated a failed coup in Munich, and after its defeat he was arrested for treason and received a 5-year sentence. After half a year, he was released in December 1924. While still in prison, he dictated to his personal assistant, Rudolf Hess, a book originally entitled “Four years of fighting against lies, stupidity and cowardice”, which was subsequently to be published under the much shorter title: Mein Kampf

Boloyannis (2007) writes that Hitler’s personality developed during his imprisonment, and he developed painting here. Some features of hyper-verbalization [inserting signatures and information about objects, characteristic of people with brain damage (see Fig. 3 A)] can be observed in his paintings. This might
be the result of being exposed to poisonous gas while serving in the army during the First World War. Moreover, many reliable sources have reported that Hitler suffered from a neurodegenerative disease of the brain – Parkinson’s disease. It is worth noting that although Hitler wanted to be regarded as a socially sensitivity person, his art shows the marginalization of human figures, which says a lot about his cold and degrading attitude towards people (cf. Fig. 4, to the right).

Today both art therapists as well as psychiatrists and psychologists point out that an analysis of the works of art of a given person allows one to uncover the deep layers of the author’s personality, and this allows one to to create their portrait. This is really very difficult as it requires a deep knowledge of psychology, and psychoanalysis in particular as well as neuropsychology, pedagogy (especially cultural studies, orientation in issues of aesthetics and a knowledge of art.

JACK HENRY ABBOTT AND THE BOOK
“In the Belly of the Beast: Letters from Prison”

While Norman Mailer, the outstanding American novelist, was writing The Executioner’s Song (1979)\(^3\), he received a letter from Mr. Abbott, advising him that very few people knew much about violence in prison, and offering to instruct him. Mailer was strongly impressed by Abbott’s letter, and it started a correspondence about the 13 years of Abbott’s life spent in penal institutions. This correspondence certainly enriched the content of the book In the Belly of the Beast: Letters from Prison in which the living conditions in the institution created by the legal system are depicted.

\(^3\) The Executioner’s Song (1979) is a Pulitzer Prize–winning true crime novel by Norman Mailer that depicts the events related to the execution of Gary Gilmore for murder by the state of Utah.
The characteristic feature of the book is the lack of any organizing principle of chronology as used in traditional stories. Instead, it has an introduction by Mailer, a foreword, and twelve chapters. Each chapter bears a title that labels the chapter’s content; the text consists of excerpts on the subject, extracted from the letters. The chapters do not possess distinct divisions for there is a lot of overlap in subject matter. Anatole Broyard, who reviewed the book in 1981, stated that the best segments of the book were Abbott’s letters to Norman Mailer, demonstrating eloquence and an evident, if admittedly raw, talent for writing. Broyard also notes that Abbott was less persuading when the topic turned to “rants about justice, politics and philosophy.”

As a result of their mutual exchange of letters Mailer carried out an effective public campaign for the conditional release of Abbott (born in 1944). Mailer’s public campaign was successful and Mr. Abbott obtained a conditional release. Unfortunately, after leaving prison in New York, he murdered another victim. This tragedy made Mailer the object of harsh criticism. In the 1992 in an interview in Buffalo News, he admitted that his involvement in the Abbott case was:

one more episode in my life that I can’t enjoy or brag about.

In spite of this Mailer continued to help Abbott, and after his eventual release hired him as a research assistant. It raises the question as to what made him act like this. A psychologist Robert D. Hare (1993) suggests that Abbott was probably a charming psychopath, given his history of callousness, manipulative behavior, and lack of conscience. Hare presents the following quotes from Abbott’s letters: I have walked stooped beneath your heart. I have been twisted by justice the way other men can be twisted by love. This may have caused Mailer’s admiration, but Abbott also says: I can never be happy with the petty desires this bourgeois society has branded into my flesh, my sensuous being. He also complains about the behavior of prison guards: They are extremely venal. Extremely devoid of any trace of spirituality.

Certainly, imprisonment seems to have given Abbott a passion for unqualified generalizations and has revealed his literary talent. Perhaps it explains Mailer’s fascination with Abbott. It quite often happens that really creative works of art can provoke the recipient’s uncritical perception of the creator, fascination with his person and a neurotic addiction leading to uncritical actions.

SERGIUSZ PIASECKI AS A PRISONER

Sergiusz Piasecki (1901-1964), a writer, publicist, soldier of the war of 1920, an intelligence officer of the Second Republic of Poland, Home Army soldier decorated with the Bronze Cross of Merit with Swords, a soldier under General Anders, but also a thief, smuggler, cheque forger, drug addict, who was repeatedly

---

imprisoned and sentenced to death. His biography consists of many dramatic events, which he was to describe in several autobiographical novels. He was born in the Polish-Belarusian borderland in a ruinous, depressed noble family. As a junior high school student, he was imprisoned in a Russian prison for involvement in a brawl, from where he escaped and made his way to Moscow, where he was found by the October Revolution, whose cruelty was to implant in him a deep loathing of communism. He returned to his family and became involved in the Belarusian struggle for political independence, and after the disbanding of the unit he served in, he enlisted in the Polish army. He took part in the Battle of Warsaw in 1920.

After being demobilized, he was left without any financial means. The family estate lay abroad and he had no education or professional training. He wandered around the Vilnius region and was employed by small-time criminals and smugglers. He decided to use the experience gained during his smuggling career and his fluent knowledge of Russian and Belarusian in his work for the so-called "No. Two", i.e., the Second Department of the General Staff (intelligence). Unfortunately, his work for the intelligence service was short lived - being fired for drug use and his tendency to earn illegally on the side. Thus, he returned to crime resulting in a death sentence being passed in 1926 by the court in Vilnius for assault and robbery, including armed robbery. After being pardoned by the President of the Republic of Poland, the sentence was changed to 15 years of top-security imprisonment. He served part of his sentence at the Holy Cross prison. There, he learned Polish literature and started his adventure with literature. The first two novels were confiscated by the prison guards, the third one he managed to send beyond the prison walls and it was to cause a stir in literary circles. He was The Lover of the Great Bear – an autobiographical story about the fate of the criminal world and smugglers, which not only opened the prison gate for him in 1937, but also gave rise to his career as a writer. He was released from the Holy Cross before the end of his sentence thanks to the efforts of outstanding writers with Melchior Wańkowicz at the head, who also started publishing Piasecki’s books in his own publishing house “Rój”. Here Kochanek [The Lover] (1937) was published as well as the fifth stage drama written in prison about intelligence work on the Soviet borderland (1938). Already after the war, he published Piasecki’s A Thieves Trilogy; Jabluszko [The Apple Tree] ; Spójrzę ja w okna. [I look in the Window]; Nikt na nie zbawi [None will give us Salvation]..., 1946-1947), an epic dedicated to the criminal world of Minsk, the reality of which he knew so well.

After the outbreak of World War II, Sergiusz Piasecki became involved in underground activity in the Vilnius region in the Union for Armed Struggle, and then in the Home Army, and he was noted for his brave actions against the occupying army. After the Red Army occupied the eastern territories of the Republic of Poland, he went into hiding, and in 1946 he managed to escape with an UNRRA convoy thanks to a deliberate mystification. He found himself in Italy. Here, first, thanks to M. Wańkowicz’s support, he joined the Second Corps, and then, together with de-
mobilized soldiers, he emigrated to England, where he died in 1964.

Already in Rome, he started to reconstruct the lost manuscripts, which, after compilation, he gradually published. In their plot he continued to use autobiographical themes, describing his wandering after the end of the Polish-Bolshevik war (written in prison and *The Disarmed Man’s Life* [Żywot człowieka rozbrojonego] (1962) and the two-volume *Years of Struggle* [Lata walki] (1964) describing the fight against the occupants in Vilnius. The history of Vilnius after the first entry of the Red Army was described by Piasecki in the virulently satirical *Notes of a Red Army officer* (1957), devoid of autobiographical content. He was also a columnist for the Polish-language Parisian “Kultura” and the London-based “News” [Wiadomości] in which he represented an intransigent anti-Bolshevik stance.

The entire oeuvre of Sergiusz Piasecki allows us to see him not only as a man whose social conditions and political circumstances made his start in life more difficult and forced him to embark on the path of crime, but also as an extremely strong personality, which allowed him to spring himself from life’s traps. His fate also allows him to see a person with a firm, hard character (among other things, he refused to take an oath when he joined the AGM, explaining his individualism, but in the background there was also an aversion to the London government’s overly soft policy towards the USSR) and a man of great fantasy and bravado, as evidenced by his intelligence and conspiracy actions. And what is very significant - his life choices were motivated by a particular love of freedom (perhaps even a propensity for anarchy), so his repeated stays in prison, especially his long final stay, must have been a very difficult experience for him. No wonder that he gave his most important book a title borrowed from astronomy. The view of the vast sky, with the constellation of the Great Bear above his head, was for him an imaginative symbol of a free man.

There are many other similar examples of outstanding artists who have been imprisoned in various prisons around the world. Experts agree that this literature generally concerns the influence of the prison on the personality of the creator, or changes in his psychological portrait.

**JEAN GENET AS A PRISONER**

Jean Genet (1910-1986), a French writer and playwright who owed his fame both to his life way as a social outcast and to the works that grew out of the extreme circumstances he experienced but ones which also also provoked him. Jean Paul Sartre, who contributed to Genet’s pardon after his sentence to life imprisonment, promoted his prison work and constructed the myth-legend of the “holy villain”, this is how he presented Genet in the introduction to the book “Saint Genet. Actor and martyr” (1952):

An outcast, showing bad instincts from an early age, steals from the poor peasant family that adopted him. Though punished, he continues to run away from the reformatory, where he has to be placed, steals and looted
all over, and to top it all off, he prostitutes himself. Wretched from begging, he sleeps with everyone and betrays everyone, but this is not enough for him, he decides to give in to evil with premeditation; under all circumstances, he will choose the worst, and since he has convinced himself that the greatest crime is not to do, but to preach evil, he writes terrible songs in prison, which are praise for the crime and is punished. This is what will allow him to break out of the humiliation, and poverty of prison (Sartre 1952, after: Janion, Majchrowski 1982: 222).

Genet is perhaps the most striking example of the link between a literary work and its author’s experiences, with the astonishing consequence that the author challenges the world by showing it its “reverse side”, hidden behind the appearances of social order. The unquestionable intelligence and abilities, as well as the special sensitivity of the young boy made the conclusions he drew from his fate lead him to radical and rebellious life choices. Genet himself described his situation and its consequences as such:

Since I was abandoned by my family, it seemed normal to make this situation worse by love for boys, and this love by stealing, and theft by crime or accomplice in crime. In this way, I rejected the world that rejected me. I decided to live with my head lowered and follow in the footsteps of my destiny towards the night, as opposed to you, and take over the reverse side of your beauty (after: Janion & Majchrowski 1982: 289).

This attitude towards the world and the choices he made was to lead him to prison. It is difficult to count how many years Genet spent behind bars, and how many places he visited. While wandering around Europe without a passport and living off minor thefts in the 1930s, he also reached Poland, where, of course, he was to equally face imprisonment in Katowice. But in his Journal published in 1949, the thief described Poland with kindness. It was revealed to him through fields of mature rye, through the “light” color of the hair of the young, who have some buttery Polish gentleness in them. I knew about her [Poland] that for centuries she had been crippled and pitied for her fate.” When he came back to Paris, he was imprisoned for desertion from the French Foreign Legion. In jail, he wrote scandalous novels, ones that Gallimard did not dare publish; they were published privately with the help of Jean Cocteau and J.P. Sartre. The aforementioned “the Thief’s Journal” clearly illustrates the rebellious reversal of the world of values, at the top of which is everything that indicates a devotion to Evil: thievery, betrayal, crime, unrestrained sexualism. Other prison texts include Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs (Our Lady of the Flowers, 1942) and Le Miracle de la rose (Miracle of the Rose, 1943).

In his work, Genet did not stop at exploiting his experiences from criminal and prison life. He took an interest in theatrical dramaturgy, and his plays gained publicity and were staged by leading French and European theatres. Although
The Maids (1947), The Balcony (1956), and especially The Blacks (1957) and The Screens (1966), are not free from sexual obsessions and dark bizarre visions, they are increasingly often critical to the then dominant political tendencies. His political options were sometimes controversial (during his stay in the U.S. he became involved in aiding the Black Panther movement), as they were dictated by the approval of all acts of opposition, mainly by solidarity with those who suffered harm. Genet's latest work is the essay Four Hours in Sabra and Shatila (1983), written after a trip to Beirut, where the writer describes the slaughter of a Palestinian settlement he witnessed.

However, there is also a deep moral sense hidden in Genet's life and work that deserves to be brought out. Presenting Evil in its brightest form does not necessarily mean a fascination with it, let alone approval, although in appearances it may indicate this. For it is also an expression of a helpless and desperate search for Good.

RESEARCH ON THE CREATIVE ACTIVITY OF PRISONERS

Creative expression remains ubiquitous within prison settings (Fox, 1997; Kornfeld, 1997), and many inmates naturally spend their time making art. This is understandable, as the act of creating art has been directly linked to the primitive instinctual impulses that are rampant but institutionally controlled in correctional settings aggression, sexuality, and escape (Fox, 1997). When these impulses are expressed, they are usually done so in an inappropriate way, usually with dire consequences to the one expressing such impulses, or to something or someone else on whom these impulses are focused. Art and sex are “each primal behaviors that have become elaborated in the essential service of affiliation and bonding” (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 193), whereas “the impulses that drive some people to create are perhaps alike primarily in the fact that both can be considered expressions and agents of feelings” (Dissanayake, 1988, p. 140) and can very well be a by-product of the sublimation of aggressive and libidinal impulses (Kramer, 1993; Rank, 1932; Rubin, 1984). The act of creating also allows the inmate to “escape” and retreat, if only for a few moments or hours, into his or her created world; it allows a diversion from bleak surroundings (Gussak, 1997; Gussak & Cohen-Liebman, 2001; Hall, 1997). Understandably, these impulses are greatly feared by the prison establishment if expressed in their pure form (Fox, 1997); thus, the redirection of these instincts into art is more acceptable to the establishment, even if the institution is not aware of such a redirection. Using art permits the inmate to express him- or herself in a manner acceptable to both the inside and outside culture. Creating art also provides inmates with a form of communication when the ability to express what it is they are actually feeling eludes them (Gussak, 1997).

Research in various prisons has clearly revealed the benefits of art for the prison population, both in prison and on parole. One such study, carried out by
Larry Brewster (1983, 1987) of San Jose State University, showed that there were fewer disciplinary reports of prisoners who had participated in the California Arts in Corrections program in one institution, with a fall of up to 80%. In another study, the California Department of Corrections conducted its own study four years later and showed that recidivism (unsuccessful parole) had decreased in those who had participated in art therapy (see also: Gussak 2004).

Resocialization methods employing creativity are universal (Ciosek 2003). They can be incorporated in fully closed centers as well as in open ones (Konopczyński 2007). The subject literature uses various programs and methods of resocialization through activities, e.g., work (cf. Grabias 2006; Glińska-Lachowicz 2008; Nowakowski & Gajewski 2018), art therapy (cf. Konopczyński 2014, 2018) and resocialization through art (Pachalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et al. 2010). These include:

I. Unstructured programs incorporating methods of: (1) resocialization theater; (2) resocialization through sport and recreation, (3) resocialization through work; (4) drama, psychodrama and sociodrama; (5) other methods supporting the rehabilitation process, e.g., therapeutic community (Wexler & Prendergast 2010; Neal, 2018);

II. Structured programs incorporating exploration and creation of works of art. The methods used are based on model solutions proven in carefully planned scientific studies. Well-designed outcome-based arts programs provide individuals with personal exploration. Through the exploration and production of the arts, (i.e., the visual arts, poetry, dance, music, and acting) the individual finds new meaning and self purpose, a better understanding and acceptance of others, and more self-confidence in abilities to achieve in areas previously experienced as failure. In essence, the program was designed to purposefully utilize the arts in prison settings to achieve desired self betterment and educational outcomes (see also Gussak & Virshup 1997; Gussak 2004, 2006; 2007; Pąchalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et al. 2010).

One of the most interesting studies on the creative activity of detainees described in the subject literature was presented by Pąchalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et al. (2010). The aim of the study was to assess the phenomenon of creative activity in people who were diagnosed with an identity crisis and to examine the impact of creation on their personality traits, emotional state and quality of life. The analysis also included the motivation of prisoners to create - whether it is rather a form of realization of their talents or an expression of their personality in the face of their inability to directly express their difficulties. An indirect goal was to analyze the quality of the prisoners’ creations in terms of the subjects and main themes they dealt with as well as the possibility of identity disorders.

The study included 18 men with a creative activity who were diagnosed with an identity crisis. In this group 9 respondents (hereinafter referred to as group A) are people who lost their life partners (wife, fiancée) in a car accident in which they were the drivers, the accident was their fault and they were awaiting trial, and nine men imprisoned in the Penitentiary Facility in Wiśnicz Nowy and sen-
tenced for: crimes against property (theft, robbery), crimes against family and care (evasion of maintenance obligation), financial crimes and evasion.

The authors stated that the prisoners under investigation, those who were creative and had the opportunity to create, were guided both by the desire to realize their talents and to overcome annoying boredom. Creativity enabled them to express emotions, often suppressed and difficult to verbalize. Regardless of the type of motivation, artistic creativity played a stabilizing role in the prisoners’ personality and self-system, which in the face of strong frustration and emotional tension in a situation of imprisonment may lose its previous dynamic stability. Detainees undertaking creative activity felt over time an increase in optimism and self-esteem, a reduction in negative emotional states (anxiety, sadness, depression) and an improvement in the quality of life.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF WORKS OF ART PRODUCED BY PRISONERS

Pałchalska, Bednarek, Kaczmarek (2020) present a qualitative analysis of the artistic output by prisoners emphasizing their own subjectivity and their own Self. Based on the analysis of 1000 products of various kind, including real artistic works, the authors concluded that the focus on creation allows inmates to divert attention from the current situation. Therefore, their creations often present inaccessible objects and substitute for the realization of needs. There are also problems that are difficult to move around and difficult to solve, along with memories of freedom. The subject matter of the creations (drawings, paintings, poems or songs) is diverse. Works can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Sexual objects – what attracts them is innocence, youth, purity, angelic desire - unattainable (whore – madonna).
2. Fantasy - popular among young people – an escape from grey reality - the world of monster knights, where it is known who is good and bad. There are no moral dilemmas
3. Patriotism – a desire for moral simplicity, where a man becomes aggressive in war, but with the consent and approval of society. It has been known since antiquity that war will cause a man to feel what society is trying to suppress. The joy of killing.
4. Black humor – coping with terrifying problems, running away from the truth. One of the favorite, hidden topics is the hypocrisy of power. All the people who put me in here are better than me, but it turns out that I am also good. The mechanism of a culture of shame. In general, everything about sex is hidden, they don’t talk about it. They also feel little guilt.
5. Religious themes – most often in order to please yourself to show what a polite and good person you are. Although these may also result from transformation. It is difficult to find out about this, because the truth can only be extracted by reflex.
6. **Prison themes** – deliberately and consciously evoking compassion; “How poor I am, that I am behind bars and that they treat me unfairly.” Prisoners develop specific strategies to evoke compassion.

7. **Conscious and unconscious content** – the artist expresses himself consciously bearing in mind the question how far can he go not to evoke the unwanted reactions of the authorities. The hidden truth unconsciously comes out of control.

One can express certain problems that are not available to the consciousness. The novelty feature, which appears, among others, in the described works of art, deserves special attention here. There is a change of priorities, and one of the most important issues is the theme of freedom (cf. Fig. 5).

It often happens that the work reflects attempts to find one’s own self lost due to the imprisonment (see fig. 6).

---

Fig. 5. A sculpture entitled "Is it me?" made by one of the prisoners who was active in the creative process, imprisoned at the Wiśnicz Nowy Penal Facility
Source: the material of M. Pąchalska

Fig. 6. The figure "I in prison" made by a group A prisoner
Source: Pąchalska, Bednarek, Kaczmarek (2020), with the consent of the Impuls Publishing House
The phenomenon of the expression of non-verbalised emotions, which are suppressed on a daily basis due to the inability to express them or shame, should also be taken into account here. The inmates reveal indirectly, among other things, the desire for moral simplicity, i.e., the existence of a clear borderline between good and evil (the motifs of a knight and a monster) and the ease of choice of a socially acceptable action (motifs of war, when society gives almost unconditional permission to kill).

Creativity also allows for the expression of religious feelings and beliefs. This is demonstrated by a drawing of a prisoner suffering from depression illustrating a prayer to God asking for help in overcoming loneliness (fig. 7). In the picture the patient wrote “God, make someone call me.”

Another topic is dealing with the most difficult problems, which are often more convenient to escape from. The use of so-called black humor helps to reduce the tension related to these problems. In this current there are many works that are devoted to one’s own illness or ailments (Fig. 8 A and B).

It can be seen that the artist’s style of drawing (whose great skill in creating caricatures is much appreciated) has changed slightly, one can even say that the drawing made in Study I (before the art-therapy program) is more careful in comparison with the drawing made in Study II (after the art-therapy program). On the other hand, the situation the artist represented in the first study is rather stereotypical - a man picks an apple. There is no tree. Some details suggest that this “picking” may be a minor theft (primarily the graphically suggested movements of the fingers of the left hand). In the second study, the artist presents himself as an elderly man who has no hair, is lame and sore. He can no longer grab an apple and knocks it down with a stick. The facial expression and gesture of the left hand suggest hip pain, anger and frustration. Does this man want to knock an apple off a tree or is he just trying to express his frustration?

Pąchalska, Bedarek and Kaczmarek (2020) have noticed that creative actions can be taken:

![Fig. 7. Drawing of a prisoner suffering from depression illustrating a prayer to God asking for help in overcoming loneliness. Source: clinical material of M. Pąchalska](image-url)
1. creating a virtual world in which the emotional self plays a very important role. It results from a kind of sensory deprivation related to imprisonment; thus, in their art they present the elements of reality they cannot perceive and experience directly, and as a result - they miss. This is the restrictions from family life, nature and open space, as well as the limited narcotics during imprisonment. An important everyday need revealed by the respondents in their artistic work is the sexual need. On the one hand, prisoners make drawings in which the motif of aggression appears, but on the other hand, the analysis of other products shows that they are equally, and often more, attracted to innocence and purity of feeling.

2. the self-fulfillment of talented people, because it enables them to express their mental states and feelings regardless of their level of ability. Therefore, the analysis of the work of a person awaiting a sentence and an inmate can be valuable material for getting to know them, analyzing their mental life and the progress of their rehabilitation. In addition, creative activity can be a way for a person awaiting a sentence to alleviate their mental problems (regardless of the outcome of the sentence), while in the case of a prisoner, it can simply be a way of boredom and inactivity. Another motive is related to the previous ones – creativity helps to relieve emotional tension.

3. reducing negative emotional states and personality disorders, by increasing self-esteem and improving the prisoner’s quality of life. Creative activity in prison shall contribute positively to the sense of success and increase the pleasure of creation. People who declare their willingness to continue creative activity in the experience less negative emotions (frustration, anxiety and de-
pression) and more positive experiences and feel a greater improvement in their mental state over time. The impact of creative activities undertaken in prison is less beneficial if they are treated only as a way to “kill time”.

The emotional benefits shown in the examined prisoners can be explained in neuropsychological terms as the stabilization of an unbalanced nervous system. The imprisonment and the mental isolation associated with it usually constitute a crisis situation, including frustration of needs, sensory deprivation, loneliness, anxiety, emotional tension, and often depression. The act of creation gives inmates a possibility to focus on the work they are doing, and thus provide pleasant stimuli to the brain. Naturally each person has his own individual and unique model of the world and his own system of needs and values. That is why he also chooses different means and subjects of creation. Therefore, creation is a pleasant experience, which stimulates the reward system.

Pleasant experiences release positive emotions (e.g., joy), because they stimulate the reward system (Fig. 9) by creating connections from the basal part of the frontal cortex to the anterior (emotional) part of the anterior cingulate cortex. At the same time, the penalty system is weakened. The strength and duration of these emotions are associated with the importance of the event for the artist. Therefore, exhibition, and the positive reactions of the audience, might modify the minimal (working) self, and the longitudinal (autobiographical) self, strengthening the significance of a given (negative or positive) event (see: Pachalska 2019).

As noted by Konopczyński (2018: 1):

A man who develops by experiencing new elements of culture and art for himself, broadens and deepens his emotions, perception, thinking and imagination. If we assume that the creative solution of problem situations and the new identity features acquired in this way meet the needs of man in a socially acceptable way, we largely minimize the danger of continuing
his pathological behavior, reducing or at least minimizing any negative effects of faulty socialization processes on the young person’s identity.

Resocialization with the use of creative activity reduces the prisoner’s concentration on isolation and health (Machel 2007). This process counteracts chaos and contributes to the gradual stabilization of the emotional system. Creative activity, by strengthening emotional stability, helps regain balance and influences the prisoner’s adaptation to the life situation in which he finds himself (see also Pąchalska, Ledwoch, Tomaszewska et al. 2010). Creative activity helps to reduce internal tensions. It creates opportunities to bring out both positive and negative emotions. It supports the process of self-reflection and self-identification. It becomes a language and a space for communication with oneself and with other people. The symbolization of unconscious content is conducive to a better understanding of yourself. The expression of self in the conditions of a safe symbol allows you to maintain a sense of security, thanks to which creativity gives a sense of positive agency. It arouses and strengthens sensitivity to the world of beauty and other people. Therefore, it promotes the reintegration of the individual and the social (including cultural) self.

CONCLUSIONS

Research in various prisons has clearly revealed the benefits of art for prisoners, both in prison and on parole. Studies revealed that there were fewer disciplinary reports on prisoners who participated in arts corrections programs. It was also found that recidivism (unsuccessful parole) decreased in those who had participated in art therapy. It shows that the initiation of creative activity by prisoners played an important role in the process of social rehabilitation. At the same time, analysis of works of art produces by prisoners gives insight into the neuropsychological mechanisms of creation and provides important information for planning therapeutic programs.

Acknowledgment

The author of this article is very grateful to Prof. Maria Pąchalska, MD., Ph.D. for providing access to works of art made by prisoners and for helping in their interpretation.

REFERENCES


Kaczmarek, B.L.J. (2012). Cudowne krosna umysłu, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.


**Corresponding author:**
Mariusz Gajewski
Pontifical University of John Paul II, in Cracow, Poland
31-002 Kraków
Kanonicza 25
e-mail: gajewskisi@gmail.com