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slavka.kopcakova@unipo.sk**AESTHETICS EDUCATION AND ITS POSITION
IN THE 21ST-CENTURY DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**Key words: *art, aesthetics education, music education, education, critical thinking, democracy***Introduction**

Art is an exclusively human creation, a manifestation of the creative will and authenticity of man, intentionality¹ as a feature of his mental activity, the result of his effort to withdraw from everyday reality and to experience life not only through the limits of material values, but also by means of enjoying aesthetic and artistic values². In addition to the sphere of reason and feeling, we deal with a third modus – modus Vivendi – a sphere in which mental values cross with spiritual values, rationality with emotionality. Art is what defines us as human beings; it is also the space for contemplation, an external expression of the subjectively perceived world that does not happen through real imagery, rather through transforming the perception of our human world into images, feelings, verbal and nonverbal messages encoded by a specific artistic language³.

¹ Intentionality is the objective of an act of consciousness, wilfulness in human behavior and action. John Searle, *Mind. A Brief Introduction* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 116. According to the author (Ibidem, 172), it is a basic philosophical category that explains the contents of human consciousness, thought, or behavior. It reflects human consciousness, at the level of Cognition as its Perception, Memory, and Belief; at the level of Intention in Action, its Prior Intention, and Desire.

² Jan Slavík, Vladimír Chrz, Stanislav Štech et al., *Tvorba jako způsob poznávání* (Praha: Karolinum, 2013), 115. “The mediator between the facts and the values of creation is the content – it is interpreted from artifacts so that their values can be appreciated”. The content of the work grows out of its context, which is also conditioned by it. The need for interpretation then creates a connection between an interpreted artefact and an interpretive response to it (ibidem, 216).

³ The individual’s subjective perception of the world, and subjective feeling is part of the work’s content, but its perception of interpretation by other people is intersubjective and is a reaction to

Art can be perceived by every man; but if s/he wants to fully resolve the message, function and meanings generated in the context of artistic performance (or intimate perception in the home environment), s/he needs to refine his/her artistic and aesthetic perception, an ability to experience and appreciate⁴. The fact that we try to sensibly grasp the motives of our world through the aesthetic sense gives life a multitude of ambitions and gives us the freedom and the opportunity to perceive and observe things for themselves, not only for our sake or economic benefit. This helps us pursue a good and free life, fulfill its sense⁵. Establishing contact with art is an important part of such a life strategy for us as well as for our environment⁶. Therefore, it is extremely important to refine and stimulate the aesthetic sense, aesthetic perception, and aesthetic taste in young people from their early age. It is a task for the society – very important, though neglected – raised again and again by the most important thinkers of every age. Konrad Paul Liessmann⁷ says this (my translation):

We can tell the courage, generosity, sovereignty and humanity of the society by what role it actually admits to muses in its educational policy programs, curricula, and pedagogical and academic discussions.

Educating new generations, not only in terms of technology development but also in terms of acquiring certain habits for cultural survival outside of future work is the mission of aesthetic educational school subjects as well as arts sciences and aesthetics disciplines during the training of aesthetics educators⁸. Although it is increasingly emphasized that university studies (but also lower levels of education) be solely intended to provide for the future professional requirements of the society (even attempting to

an objectively existing work. This distinction allows us to perceive different interpretations. Jan Slavík. “Artefiletika – příležitost pro expresi v dialogu teorie a praxe”. *Kultura, umění a výchova* 3, 1 (2015), accessed 26.01.2018, www.kuv.upol.cz/index.php?seo_url=aktualni-cislo&casopis=8&clanek=92. According to the author, grasping the empathic concept is dependent on the ability to generalize one's own inner state in order to understand the state of the other by taking the point of view: “The empathic concept is thus expressed in the form of a metaphorical judgment calling for comparison between the states of the I–you.”

⁴ The quality of interpretation is improved in the process of perception and subsequent interpretation and evaluation of the work. An example of how theory and practice combine in the attempt to achieve the quality of interpretation is Czech artefiletics, as the theoretically elaborated concept applied in practice (especially) art education. See: Slavík, *Artefiletika*.

⁵ Adrián Kvokačka, “Udalosť (re)prezentácie a muzeoedukológia”, in: *Muzeoedukológia ako reflexia prístupov k zvládanou dôsledkov celoeurópskych zmien v múzeách a galériách (Zborník príspevkov z medzinárodného vedeckého sympózia)* (Medzilaborce: MMUAW, 2006), 94. “The mere process of searching for meaning, that art enables us to think, is meaningful.”

⁶ Reflective dialogue with oneself and with other people promotes prosocial behavior, cultural and ecological development of personality and society.

⁷ Konrad Paul Liessmann, *Hodina duchů. Praxe nevzdelanosti. Polemický spis* (Praha: Academia, 2015), p. 133.

⁸ An integral part of the development of aesthetic sensitivity is competence in the artistic field, not only the professional training of artists, but also the cultivated theoretical reflection of the performing arts, including the ability to perceive, to grasp, but also to critically evaluate artistic expressions of different types and genres in the variability of historical developmental forms and current metamorphoses.

change the ideal of the university), it should be stressed that education and training is not just about acquiring professional skills; it is also about an overall view of life through the development of critical thinking that is not innate, but can be acquired through systematic efforts. It cannot be achieved by watching media or internet online courses, etc., but it is necessary that a modern school, a modern university create space for it.

In the following considerations, I want to reflect on to what degree the 21st-century society accepts the potential of aesthetic-educational school subjects to foster the development of aesthetic experience⁹ as a starting point for developing the ability to express authentic attitudes through the experience of art, which proceeds towards the reflection of the nature of social processes in a democratic society. Aesthetic education, which brings together music, art, drama, and literary education, is seen as an activity by means of which the need for aesthetic perception, aesthetic experiences, and aesthetic self-esteem can be installed in the human psyche; moreover, an activity causing a person to form an evaluative relationship to aesthetic phenomena. Karla Brückner maintains that the aim of this intentional educational activity is to “develop aesthetic susceptibility”, and thus to prepare a young person for “aesthetically instructed transformation of the world”¹⁰. The receptive side of aesthetics education is targeted at developing the perception, survival, and appreciation of beauty in art and beyond art. The active side of this process, when students themselves create aesthetic values¹¹ through their artistic expressions or possibly outside the field of art, cannot be separated from it.¹²

The status and importance of art in the European education systems in the historical account

The answers to the questions of why one needs to perceive and create art from the beginning of one's self-realization can be found in the philosophy of art and the history of aesthetics. Already in ancient views of art, we sometimes encounter contradictory, yet to a great degree positive, perspectives on the usefulness of music for a society in the sense of *paideia*, *katharsis* or the *éthos* theory. Medieval scholastics

⁹ It is necessary to constantly point out that aesthetic education as an important component of personality formation still remains undervalued and marginalized in the number of classes per week. Lukaš Makky, “Estetická výchova ako nutná zložka vzdelania a výchovy žiaka – interdisciplinárny pohľad”, *Edukácia: vedecko-odborný časopis* 1, 1 (2015): 148. The author speaks of “guided aesthetic experience”, which makes the young person “capable of forming or at least creatively thinking).

¹⁰ Karla Brücknerová, *Skici ze současné estetické výchovy* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2011), 14.

¹¹ For differentiation between aesthetic value and artistic value, see eg. Erich Mistrík, *Estetický slovník* (Bratislava: Iris, 2007). This (so-called aesthetic dualism) is very clearly distinguished and explained by Tomáš Kulka, *Umění a kýt* (Praha: Torst, 1994). The aesthetic value, according to Kulka (p. 62), is defined through the Bersdley triad of unity-complexity-intensity as positive and universal aesthetic qualities. The artistic value “reflects the general importance of innovation exemplified by the work for the art world and the potential of this innovation for its further aesthetic and artistic use”. Tomáš Kulka, “Falzum a hodnocení uměleckých děl”, in: *Estetika na přelomu milénia*, ed. Zahradka, P. et al. (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2010), 196.

¹² I have in mind, on the one hand, the area of artistic activity (creation) and reception, but we are also expanding our understanding of the area of artistic and non-artistic aesthetics.

considered art as a way of communicating with higher powers and of reaching salvation. At the turn of the late Middle Ages and the New Age, humanist scholars came to believe that music by means of triggering affect was a way of influencing human behavior, character; not surprisingly, they drew from the Ancient times. The enlightenment and rationalist ideas of the 17th and 18th centuries, through the introduction of the affection theory, then through its gradual rejection, became reflected in the aesthetics category of beauty, expressive aesthetics, reflections on the unity of beautiful art or taste categories, their sense of art perception. The 18th century is the time of the birth of aesthetics as a science, as well as the time of intensified efforts to democratize and spread the ideals of aesthetic education. Jean Jacques Rousseau has greatly appreciated the educational role of art, and has placed the sense of perception (vision, hearing) and the cultivation of taste into the center of his educational system. In the society of his time, Frederick Schiller noticed unilateralism, caused by the differentiation of science and technical development; he considered the aesthetic development of all the population as a way of overcoming this situation (the idea of so-called aesthetic state)¹³.

In our intellectual environment, during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the introduction of the teaching of beautiful sciences and aesthetics, which was an important part of the Theresian and Josephian reforms¹⁴, can be considered as a significant example of the importance of aesthetics. Aesthetics was a significant element of contemporary Austrian attempts for new national education (Nationalbildung). In the monarchy, according to Emil Hlobil, the teaching of good taste became literally a national interest in the second half of the 18th century.¹⁵ In the school system in Upper Hungary (today's territory of Slovakia), aesthetics has been a solid part of the curriculum of Evangelical lyceums, philosophical, legal, and theological colleges since the beginning of the 19th century. Contrary to the whole array of personalities who have entered the history of Slovak aesthetics, Tobias Gottfried Schröer, a relentless promoter of education through arts and art education¹⁶, is left stranded and in the seclusion, out of scholars' interest. He became the author of a unique textbook of aesthetics education and of a very progressive textbook of education¹⁷.

¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *Výbor z filosofických spisů* (Praha: Svoboda-Libertas, 1992), 225, 226.

¹⁴ Maria Theresa (1717-1780), a monarch in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, known for her enlightenment reforms. In particular, it is the education reform in the Hungarian part of the monarchy, based on the document Ratio educationis, which began in 1777. Her successor, her son Joseph II. (1741-1790), continued in her reform efforts in other areas of the political and religious life of the monarchy.

¹⁵ Tomáš Hlobil, *Výuka dobrého vkusu jako státní zájem. Počátky pražské univerzitní estetiky ve stře-doevropských souvislostech 1763-1805* (Praha: Togga, Univerzita Karlova, 2011), 11-12. "The teaching of good taste – if we paraphrase the words of Joseph University Reforms initiator Joseph Gottfried van Swieten – has become a national interest (Nationalinteresse)".

¹⁶ See: Slávka Kopčáková, Slávka Oriňáková, "Estetická teória a estetická výchova v teoretickom diele Tobiasa Gottfrieda Schröera", in *Súčasná hudobnoestetické myslenie na Slovensku v kontexte metodologických problémov estetiky a muzikológie* (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta PU, 2016), 105.

¹⁷ It is a textbook of aesthetics of Isagoge in erudition aestheticam – Tobias Godofredus Schröer, *Isagoge in eruditionem aestheticam* (Posonii: Typis Caroli Wigand, 1842), and a textbook of pedagogy Institutiones pedagogicae sive de arte educandi free sinopticus – idem, *Institutiones pedagogicae sive de arte educandi liber sinopticus. Quem Scholis suis conscripsit Godofreus Schröer* (Magyar-Ovárini: Typis&sumptibus Alexandrii Czéh, 1848). T.G. Schröer, however, is the author of several other textbooks (Latin, literature, art history, etc.) that testify to the realization of his complex ideal of aesthetic education.

Throughout the 19th century, the aesthetic effort gained a considerably deepened theoretical reflection. Literature people, philosophers, and artists kept bringing new and new ideas about art and its important role in a young person's development. The fact remains that aesthetics education, in various forms of institutionalization and conception (depending on the theoretical conceptions and political conditions of a particular country), has continued to be an organic component of the content curriculum of primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. The 20th century, when artistic activities resulted in pluralism in art as well as in scientific thoughts, offered several new answers to the questions of the meaning and significance of music for man. In particular, structuralist, phenomenological, or semiotic scientific concepts have pragmatically redirected scientific thinking towards much greater emphasis on the social functions of art. In the second half of the 20th century, the concept of the so-called *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (understanding music history as history of art and its reception), which, in conjunction with the turn of attention towards the child, has emphasized the importance of linking receptive and active components of aesthetics-educational concepts.

Selected modern concepts of aesthetics education enhancing democratic models of behavior

The above brief historical account indicated the position of art in modern cultural eras, when the emphasis on a young man's aesthetic upbringing was at times a national interest, some other time was it was backgrounded, but it never occurred at the edge of interest. Through the ideas of important thinkers of the 20th and 21st centuries (John Dewey, Paul G. Woodford et al.), I aim to emphasize the potential of musical, artistic, literary, dramatic education in the development of critical thinking as a fundamental attribute in the education of authentic, democratically-minded personality. Active reception of art and the evaluation of artistic expressions occupy an important place in understanding one's position in the society that faces many civilization and political challenges, poverty, migration, change of cultural mechanisms and reception habits. All this requires reflection at the level of the philosophy of education in cooperation with its related disciplines such as pedagogy, aesthetics, culturology in the field of education. Each educational activity is essentially based on the quality professional preparation of its facilitator – the teacher. Creative and freely-making-decision teachers receive training at universities of humanities conducting research in humanities and social sciences. In recent decades, in our technology-oriented society, they have gotten the short end, which is tangible at almost every level.

At the end of 2016, in the Slovak media space, the most important figures of academic and cultural life called attention to this situation. They wrote a document titled "The Memorandum of Social and Human Scientists in Slovakia,"¹⁸ which, compared to the more familiar older document, the "Millennium" project (2000), concisely sums up the importance of social sciences and humanities in relation to real problems of

¹⁸ The document was initiated by a number of prominent personalities of Slovak scientific and academic life (Gabriel Bianchi, Peter Zajac, Erich Mistrík, etc.), and it originated in Bratislava (November 17 - December 5, 2016). In January 2017, more than 300 scientists joined the Memorandum.

this world linked to the declaration that these sciences offer their potential and current expertise in the form of analyses and problem-solving strategies. I mention at least some of the key ideas describing the goals and missions of humanities (my translation): “they provide the understanding of the world and a man’s place in it in social and historical contexts”; “they bring about the cultivation of public space and effective methods of participation in public debates”; “they represent a value framework of educatedness, an instrument of orientation in the diverse world images and in the practical usage of the results of scientific and technological progress”.¹⁹ Social and Humanities scientists in Slovakia accept social responsibility for “critical analysis of the human existence and the current state of our society and the risky trends of its development”, “learning about the civilization challenges and existential threats of the present world” or “developing an open democratic dialogue in order to create a free, pluralist, and creative society”²⁰ (my translation).

The outcomes of the humanities research become the subject-matter of educational activities at universities. In terms of art, their transfer to school practice takes place through pedagogical activities of aesthetics, music, art, etc. teachers, since it is of utmost importance to raise students capable of critical thinking, i.e. to be able to select values, to take critical attitudes and educate democratically-minded people. Articulating the political importance of music or aesthetics education at school is the focus of many documents written not only by politicians but also theoreticians and researchers in the field of education, philosophy, or philosophy of education. In the modern history of philosophy of education, already in the first decades of the 20th century, John Dewey, the most influential American social philosopher and reformer of pedagogy, in his works, pointed to the importance of arts education not only for future artists and professionals, but also for all children. Because of the social function of art, arts education helps them integrate into the society, participate in creation and acceptance of its values.

In his paper “The School and Society” (1900), Dewey emphasizes that school should be active in those types of activities that reflect the life of the wider population and pass it through the spirit of art, history, and science.²¹ In his most important work, “Art as Experience” (1934), Dewey states: “Even a crude experience, if authentic, is more fit to give a clue to the intrinsic nature of the aesthetic experience than is an object already set apart from any other mode of experience.”²² He then emphasizes the primary function of an authentic experience for interiorizing an aesthetic experience and points out how important it is for people not just to admire and imitate great artists but to create their very own musical and artistic experiences. Based on the liberal-democratic viewpoint, Dewey’s public (common) musical values should be shared in the society as social and musical experiences. Dewey did not consider these values to be fixed or unchangeable (although he emphasized tradition as the basis of musical education), but

¹⁹ Výzva k vedeckej integrite a otvorenej komunikácii, http://www.sav.sk/index.php?doc=services-news&source_no=20&news_no=6701, accessed 06.05.2017.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 39. “[...] active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science.”

²² John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), 41.

he recognized their constant volatility in response to social change. Lenka Bandurová points out that through these ideas he helped to open the school to a change and innovation, to integrate it with the outside world.²³ At the level of education (the educational influence of creation as expressiveness and its reflection based on dialogue), these processes are described by Jan Slavík²⁴, with the help of John Searle's²⁵ distinguishing two ontological perspectives. It is the interaction between the first person perspective (ego-perspective) and the third person perspective. "Both of these perspectives need to be mutually different in expressiveness, but at the same time they need to maintain a connection between them."²⁶

The aim of musical education is, according to Woodford, to help children understand music and the role it has in the civilization, i.e. to overcome conventionalized and routine awareness.²⁷ Thanks to music and other arts, an individual as well as society as a whole intensify the quality of experience and also develop the associated cognitive functions, "Art education demanded of children that they exercise good judgment in sorting out the meaningful from the Merely mediocre or trivial and imagination in the generation of new and extended possibilities."²⁸ According to this author, music education is basically social and moral, it gradually teaches students how to discover values, to overcome obstacles and to contribute to the constantly changing social and musical world around them. Woodford emphasizes that art gives children a vision that takes on the depth, meaning, and moral focus of their experience. He refers to James Mursell's work "Music Education: Principles and Programs" (1956), in which Mursell²⁹ talks about participatory democracy that makes music teachers become democratic leaders whose job is to help children to think, decide, and act cooperatively.

Children discover and experience their worlds and opportunities through discovery and critical activity, and the important role of music education is to broaden their social and cultural horizons acquired through the awareness of a wide variety of human musical experiences. Woodford, drawing on Dewey, ponders over the role of intellectuals in a democratic music society, and states, "The role and moral task of the intellectual or cultural critic in all of this is to prevent closure and to extend open conversation, to help find the truth while putting things in the historical and cultural perspective."³⁰ According to him, critics of culture are responsible for initiating open communication in the search

²³ Lenka Bandurová, "Filozofické východiská Deweyho pragmatickej pedagogiky", in: *Súčasný aspekty pedagogickej profesie: recenzovaný zborník z elektronickej vedeckej konferencie s medzinárodnou účasťou* (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita, FHPV, 2014), 12. The author (ibidem, 16) expresses the view that art can "liberate man from the conveniences or pitfalls of ordinary life" along with growth as a process of increasing the participation of reason in the life management.

²⁴ Slavík, *Artefiletika*.

²⁵ Searle, *Mind. A Brief Introduction*.

²⁶ Slavík, *Artefiletika*.

²⁷ Paul Woodford, *Democracy and Music Education. Liberalism, Ethics, and the Politics of Practice* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 5.

²⁸ Ibidem, s. 50.

²⁹ Paraphrased based on Woodford, *Democracy and Music Education*, 57.

³⁰ Ibidem, s. 22.

of truth at the time that the works themselves are silent. According to Miloš Ševčík, artistic criticism is directed mainly towards the interpretation of art, that is, the real grasp of what a particular piece of art offers to admiration: “The critic actually grabs the subject in an aesthetic event”³¹ (my translation), but it is also a sacred comment that brings the intention and message of the author into the social and cultural context.³²

Developing Critical Thinking as a Key Competence of the Present through Reflection of Art

In defining the objectives of education, currently, the primary one is the development of critical thinking, alongside the development of creativity. The notion is understood as an ability to judge new information, to carefully examine and analyze it, to analyze arguments, to unveil connections, to think and to test hypotheses, to solve problems. Several authors agree that it contributes to the development of rational thinking in a democratic society.³³ The principles of critical thinking stem from the concept of constructivist psychology and pedagogy. It is not a matter of adopting knowledge, but of constructing it based on experience and already acquired knowledge. Constructivist theories are based on dialogue between teacher and student (debate, confrontation of opinions, argumentation, etc.). This potential develops mainly through the use of speech.³⁴ On the basis of three operations: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, it is also necessary to arrive at the arguments needed to take an opinion, i.e. to continually find answers to the question “why”.³⁵

In artistic and aesthetics education, more than in other disciplines, it is important that the teacher strive to understand and appreciate the diversity of ideas and experiences. What is more, critical thinking is there where no convergent thinking is. The artistic work is open to the existence of an open, infinite set of interpretations, giving the interpreter and the listener conscious freedom.³⁶ New interpretations always generate new meanings in line with changes in the life of a society and its culture. The question remains how the teacher can judge pupils’ artistic creations and their interpretations as good or as insufficient. Every field of artistic education (artistic, musical, drama,

³¹ Miloš Ševčík, *Aisthesis. Problém estetické události v myšlení E. Levinase, J.-F. Lyotarda a G. Deleuze a F. Guatariho* (Červený Kostelec: Nakladatelství Pavel Mervart, 2013), 45.

³² Ibidem, 44: “A critic is a man who has always something to say, and even in a situation when everything has been said.” He is always able to say something different from the work itself. Criticism is a continuation of an interview that is interrupted by art.

³³ Critical thinking includes attitudes, knowledge, ability, its important condition is intellectual curiosity.

³⁴ In the case of reception of artistic expressions, receptive aesthetics similarly speaks of verbal interpretation as one of its basic paradigms, and/or methods leading to music experience.

³⁵ Martina Kosturková, *Rozvoj kritického myslenia žiakov stredných škôl* (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej university, 2016), 24.

³⁶ Umberto Eco, *Otvorené dílo. Forma a neurčenost v současných poetikách* (Praha: Argo, 2015), 66-67. According to Eco, the poetics of an open work attempts to incite “act of conscious freedom” in an interpreter, openness is not seen as a necessary evil today; on the contrary, it is promoted to a creative program.

etc.) needs to develop criteria that determine the quality of interpretation, which also reflects pedagogical mastery as a result of both practical and methodological (theoretical) teacher training.

Art has always been and will always be a reflection of social changes³⁷, philosophical attitudes, and cultural problems of the times; an imprint, not direct but symbolic, i.e. in symbolic forms indicating the connection between the time and the search for the artistic expression and the way it is visualized through the languages of the individual arts. Interpreting an art work in the process of teaching aesthetics disciplines, educating a young recipient to assess and engage in authentic and critical attitude is a long-known guideline on how to critically think, how to train the ability to separate the wheat from the chaff, and not only in artistic values and pseudo-values. As a trained skill, it can also be applied to much wider areas of social life. In the disciplines focusing on understanding art, we develop critical thinking quite naturally; the need for innovation regarding the content or methodology of teaching is a long-validated process. The social impact of contact with art and aesthetic values in the broader sense of artistic but also non-intellectual practice has never been more important than in the post-factual period and in the virtual reality of the world, often viewed as the reality. Contact with art and its individual aesthetic experiencing remains the inspiration for authentic and critical thinking, giving young people instructions on how not to accept values and solutions but to ponder over their quality, their aesthetic potential, their truthfulness, divergence, the openness of their interpretation and its comparison in mutual dialogue during creative team work on artistic projects. Critical thinking, now regarded as a key competence³⁸, is allowed a wide scope in the arts education and in the education through art.

During the reception (aesthetic experiencing) and after its ending (aesthetic experience), it is worthwhile to evaluate all aspects of artistic expression such as a creator's value system, mere composition, scenic performance, performances with all their parameters such as professionalism, force of expression, authenticity of expression, the creator's, performer's, artist's mastery, even the labeling of possible overcoming the values borne by the work in today's social reality³⁹. Assessing perception and subsequent interpretation of art is irreplaceable training that can be developed from early childhood in nonviolent, natural, sometimes less scientific ways, but primarily in a way leading to the self-discovery of man and his place in the world through contact with the world of aesthetic experiences and values.

³⁷ For art as a social institution, as an instrument of justice and solidarity, a connection between artistic ideas and a wide range of social thinking and negotiation patterns, see Lambert Zuidervaart, *Umění a sociální transformace, pravda, autonomie a společenské makrostruktury* (Ústí nad Labem: Fakulta umění a designu Univerzity J.E. Purkyně, 2015). On the relationship of art and life, art and experience, see: Dewey, *Art as Experience*; Richard Schusterman, *Estetika pragmatizmu* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2003).

³⁸ Kosturková, *Rozvoj kritického myslenia*, p. 37. The author states: "At present, the ability to think critically is considered to be one of the key competences that can be developed in all school subjects."

³⁹ Adrián Kvokačka, "Estetické a umelecké dimenzie literárneho diela – estetický zážitok a (seba) poznanie", in: *Jazyk a literatúra v škole: zážitok a poznanie (zborník z medzinárodnej konferencie Jazyk a literatúra v škole – zážitok a poznanie, 18.-19.10.2007 v Prešove)* (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita, Fakulta humanitných a prírodných vied, 2008), 216-220.

The Importance of Aesthetic and Artistic Competence for the Development of a Free- and Democratically-minded Personality

Understanding art, which is a concentrated sum of aesthetic values, is understanding merely aesthetic sense; educational processes in artistic and aesthetics education are always real or potential “aesthetic situations”. The goal is to optimize the aesthetic response capability so that, during reception, mastering art is as complex and valuable as possible, so that it can enrich a person with intellectual and ethical qualities, thus form the aesthetic dispositions of the subject. Mastering art is an interaction of aesthetic-artistic, educational and theoretical-cognitive techniques. Irena Medňanská draws attention to key competences in the area of education and training; the important one is that “in the systems of key competencies there is no art education, the development of creativity, the space for self-realization of the student through art”⁴⁰, thus aesthetic-artistic competence as such is absent. Its essence lies in experience, realization and reflection of communication through art. Based on the system, the aesthetic situation is a part of aesthetics education, which justifies the effort to deepen pedagogical research in the field of scientific exploration focused on the issue of active and receptive concept of aesthetic processes. Their quality depends not only on the cognitive abilities of man, the intelligence and the quality of thinking, but according to Vladimíra Čavojová, the willingness to try to think is also related to the values we believe in: “to what extent we appreciate the truth, to what extent we favor the common good over our own comfort or how cynical view of the world we have”⁴¹ (my translation). The author draws attention to the resignation of people from the information explosion and the complexity of social problems.

Art expands our auditory, visual, haptic experience, but also includes aspects of emotional or intellectual life, helping us understand what it means to be a human being. Art tells us the truth about us; we consider it to be another possibility of knowing and reflecting the world, less cognitive, more emotional, and especially supremely free. Therefore, educational processes controlled from the highest political levels should not underestimate or eliminate artistic activities and the active reception of art in the school practice. Conversely, political representations should ultimately assign them their dignified place in the upbringing of future generations. Those without critical thinking will not be able to re-evaluate the rapidly changing technological, behavioral, environmental, global political, and cultural trends of the society. The prominent Czech philosopher, Jan Patočka, considers art to be at once an expression of meaning and one of the educational powers,⁴² and through the acting of these powers, history is created⁴³. The ulti-

⁴⁰ Irena Medňanská, *Systematika hudobnej pedagogiky* (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita), 103.

⁴¹ Vladimíra Čavojová et al., *Rozum: Návod na použitie. Psychológia racionálneho myslenia* (Bratislava: Iris, 2016), 24.

⁴² Miloš Ševčík, *Umění jako vyjádření smyslu* (Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita v Plzni a vyd. Mervart, 2014), 140. The author states: “In Patočka’s view, it is necessary to admit to the artistic work a more important purpose. Patočka concludes that the key gives the artwork [...] the meaning of a ‘pure understanding of being’ thanks to which the world appears and ultimately makes it possible for a displayed object to appear in the image enriched by the glow of being”.

⁴³ This study is the output of KEGA project No. 016PU-4/2018 “*Compendium Aestheticae: edícia učebných textov pre študijný program estetika/edition of study texts for study program aesthetics*” (2018-2020), at IUEK FF PU v Prešove.

mate recognition of a dignified status of aesthetics education is one of the ways of how to cope with the 21st-century civilization challenges, how to preserve the ideals of democracy, solidarity, and fellowship.

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Summary

AESTHETICS EDUCATION AND ITS POSITION IN THE 21ST-CENTURY DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

In the paper, the author considers philosophical, aesthetic and pedagogical concepts explaining the specific position of aesthetics education in the education system and its importance in developing the ability to express authentic attitudes not only in the assessment of the arts but also in social processes of a democratic society. A historical account is part of this consideration, as it gives us an overview of cultural epochs in which emphasis on the aesthetics education of a young person became a national interest or, on the contrary, it stood partly on the edge of interest. Through the ideas of important thinkers of

the 20th and 21st centuries (John Dewey, Paul G. Woodford, etc.), I try to emphasize the potential of musical, artistic, literary, dramatic education in the development of critical thinking as a fundamental attribute in the education of an authentic, free- and democratically-minded person. Active reception of art and the evaluation of artistic expressions occupy an important place in the awareness of one's position in a society that faces many civilization and political challenges, such as poverty, migration, change of cultural mechanisms, and reception habits. All this requires reflection at the level of the philosophy of education in co-operation with its related disciplines, like pedagogy, aesthetics, cultural studies, and their applied educational disciplines. The definitive recognition of a dignified status for aesthetics education is one of the ways of coping with the civilization challenges of the 21st century and of flexible re-evaluation of the changing trends in the technology-oriented society structure and the one-sided general education.

Key words: *art, aesthetics education, music education, education, critical thinking, democracy*

