

Art just for artists? Considerations based on R. Steiner

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this study was to understand the role of creative artistic activity in human development, based on the theoretical reference of Steiner, Goethe and Schiller. This study is justified by the discussions on the therapeutic process, given the contribution of artistic activity in facing difficult moments in life. Steiner presents the notion of intuitive thinking, proper to the development of an ethical individualism, representing the subject's experience of consciousness and freedom. In his method of nature observation, Goethe makes evident the importance of intuition and the observation of phenomena from different perspectives, seeking to understand their integration with the whole. Schiller, in turn, indicates the play impulse, the synthesis between passion and reason, as the truly human domain of freedom which can be released through art. This is basically a qualitative study, performed by analysing ten semi-structured interviews with adults who are not artists, seeking to establish recurring themes present in their speech. All the participants related their moments of creation or contact with artistic activities as being pleasurable. A recurring theme spoken of by in the speech of the participants is that of artistic activity as a form of expression that enables self-knowledge, plenitude, relaxation and coping with difficult situations in life. It can be observed that even though they were not artists, the participants reported significant moments of involvement with art, present especially during childhood and adolescence. Steiner makes evident the importance of artistic activities in facilitating the cognitive process, since it enables the development of observation and intuitive thinking. These are linked to the development of consciousness and responsibility, proper to a person seeking their own freedom. In the interviews, their speech the participants give significance to their contacts with art as being moments of self-discovery, self-knowledge and overcoming difficult moments or, in other words, moments of the development of the consciousness of themselves in relation to their experiences. The conclusion is reached that creative artistic activity is important for human development because it develops consciousness and, in this way, the possibility of freedom. As such, it is interesting to study the possibilities of creative artistic activities in the therapeutic process by also taking Goethe, Schiller and Steiner as a reference.

Keywords: Steiner, art, human development.

Introduction

The purpose of this study, based on the theoretical framework of Steiner, Goethe and Schiller, was to understand the contribution of creative artistic activity to human development. This study is justified by its possible contribution to discussions on the therapeutic process, in view of the research into the role of artistic activity in facing difficult times in life.

According to Camargo (2008), Duarte Jr. (2010) and Veiga (2014), relationships based on economic and instrumental relationships are evident in the current world, whereby subjects lose their autonomy, singularity and movement. We are experiencing a reality driven by rational and fragmented logic which privileges the intellect.

Within this context, the possibility of recovering these lost characteristics so fundamental to human development is sought through creative artistic activity and education of the senses (Duarte Jr., 2010). Interest exists both in Education and Psychology in studying artistic activity as a means of facilitating autonomy and creativity. For Eça (2010), artistic activity provides a unique opportunity within education, in that it fosters active, creative and questioning learning. In the view of Coqueiro, Vieira and Freitas (2010), art therapy is contributing towards appeasing the negative effects experienced by people undergoing mental suffering, given that it is propitious to changes in the affective, interpersonal and relationship fields.

A possible contribution to In the midst of this discussion, a possible contribution by Steiner's are his reflections on the crisis of contemporary thinking and his cognitive method, based on the integration of three categories: wanting, feeling and thinking. For Steiner (2004), man can be understood to be a citizen of three worlds. "Through his body, he belongs to the world he perceives with that body; through his soul, he builds his world; through his spirit a world appears to him that is above the other two worlds" (Steiner, 2004b, p.29). Having knowledge of man therefore requires the observation of his participation in these three worlds. As such, Steiner provides new ways for understanding man and the role of creative artistic activity in facilitating human development.

Steiner introduces the notion of intuitive thinking, proper to the development of ethical individualism, representing the subject's experience of consciousness and freedom. In his true-to-nature method of nature observation, Goethe makes evident the importance of intuition and the observation of phenomena from different perspectives, seeking to comprehend their integration with the whole. Schiller in turn indicates the play impulse, the synthesis between passion and reason, as being the domain of truly human freedom capable of being triggered through art.

Method

This is a qualitative exploratory study, comprised of ten non-artist adults selected using convenience sampling. Semi-structured interviews were applied comprised of nine questions tested beforehand in a pilot study and covering the relationship between art and the participants' lives. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The participants' replies to the nine questions were categorized on a descriptive spreadsheet selecting parts containing the essence of their answers. The interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes and were brought to a close when data collection became saturated. The analysis considered the trajectory of each adult in their relationship with art, seeking to establish recurring themes in their replies. Following this and based on the criterion of translating as clearly as possible the participants' thoughts in relation to art, four of the nine interview questions were selected for this study. The questions refer to: 1) contact with art; 2) definition of art; 3) possible relation between difficult times they faced and art, and; 4) the meaning of art in their lives.

Results and Discussion

The study was performed in Curitiba (state of Paraná, Brazil) and is comprised of a heterogeneous sample in terms of age, ranging between 21 and 56 years. Eight are women, nine are undergraduates or graduates and the sample is divided between four professionals and six students from different areas. Moreover, even though the participants have different levels of contact with art, they do not consider themselves to be artists and do not work professionally as artists. Fictitious names are used to identify the participants so as to ensure confidentiality.

Three categories were found regarding the question on contact with art: contemplating art (Ana, João and Tatiana); working with art (Lara); and contemplating and working with art (Rebeca, Luisa, Juliana, Roberto, Victória and Tarsila).

João exemplifies contact with art basically through contemplating it: "all my life I've had a relationship with art, but only from the position of a spectator, through music, cinema. Even so, I've never given the

subject serious consideration. It's just as a consumer or spectator of art". It is possible to observe that in this category the essence of what the participants say about their contacts with art relates to their involvement as spectators, by listening to music, watching films etc. As such, when the participants reflect on their contacts with art there is recurring use in their speech of the verbs to see, to hear and to read. These verbs indicate actions of the subject as a spectator, an observer of art, but not a subject taking part in art.

Only one participant, Lara, did not consider that her contact with art took place through observation. All the others put observation as the form, or the initial form, of them making contact with art. This indicates the possible importance for human development of contemplating and observing prior to the thinking process, given that by observing, the subject's feelings are awakened in relation to other aspects that mere preconceived theorization of reality does not allow. Lara just reflects about the artistic activities she undertakes rather than acting as a spectator. "For example, when I'm very tired, I prefer to go out, look at the landscape, go home and think I'm an artist and play a role"(Lara) or when asked about an artistic activity she undertook: "Only the play-acting I did for three years, only that, when I was at school"(Lara). This category is different from that the category of contemplating art, because of the way in which the participants were in contact with it, either by doing some artistic activity or contemplating such activities.

In the latter category, contemplating and working with art, the participants had contact with art both through contemplation or observation, and also by working with or doing art. This group differentiates itself through the singular way in which they made contact with art. Contact occurred through the combination of two elements, the activity of observing or contemplating art and acting artistically. To a certain extent, the participants in this category can be considered to have developed that contact with art more intimately, when compared to other categories, given that contact occurs simultaneously through activities that are qualitatively different. Rebeca can represent this category: "I had contact from the first to third year of high school, doing theatre... Today it's just for entertainment, listening to music, watching a film".

With regard to the question about contact, it is interesting to note that in general the participants select observation as the foremost form of contact with art and, furthermore, frequently refer to childhood as being the period of most contact with art. Steiner's (2000) cognitive process involves two moments. The first moment refers to observation and the second to thinking. It is through this process of observing and thinking, by feeling and wanting, that intuitive thinking and ethical individualism are developed. Art enables the two movements necessary for the process of intuitive thinking: observation and thinking.

On the other hand, in the initial words of the participants, regardless of the categories they represent, references can frequently be seen to moments in childhood characterized by having significant contact with art. "When I play with my daughter or teach her art, such as drawing, puppet theatre, songs" (Rebeca). In this phase, more than in adulthood, children experience their senses intensely (hearing, taste, touch etc) and through them they get to know the world. These sensations, which are forgotten in adulthood and so intensely experienced in childhood, are retrieved through creative artistic activity. This may provide indications as to why childhood is frequently remembered when reflecting on contact with art, as art requires this observation and enchantment with the world which is so recurrent in childhood.

In the replies to the question on the definition of art, different ways of defining it were found based on four categories: living is an art (Rebeca, Juliana and Tarsila), whereby art is essentially the stance we take in the world, a way of being, acting authentically; the category of art as a means of expression (Luisa, Lara, Roberto, Victória and Tatiana), where art is a form of expression of subjectivity, so as to reach others; the category of art as a means of expression and reflection (Ana), in which art is a means of expression, reflection and self-knowledge; and the category of art as a subjective intuitive encounter (João), in which the essence of art should not be defined, since the intuitive perception of what art is lies in the subjective encounter with it., intuitively there is the perception of what art is.

The first category refers to the participants Rebeca, Juliana and Tarsila, whose replies revealed that they understand art, essentially, as a way of taking a stance in the world, a way of being, acting. In their replies the characteristic of art as a way of being authentic is present. "Art is a means of catharsis, and principally a way of taking a stance in the world as yourself" (Juliana). Of the three participants in this category, two

raised the issue of the aesthetics present in this way of taking a stance in the world. “Art, you know, because it’s something beautiful and something I lived... I can explain it to you, emotion... I developed body, mind” (Tarsila). What Tarsila says here exemplifies the essence of this category, in which art is a way of taking a stance in the world, whereby art must truly be lived. Furthermore, Tarsila, as well as Juliana, refer to aesthetics as a way of taking a stance in the world through art.

The second category, a means of expression, relates, as its name suggests, to the perception of art as a form of expression. Not just any means of expression, but a means of expressing something about oneself to others. As such, the participants in this category: Luisa, Lara, Roberto, Victória and Tatiana refer to art as a subject’s means of expression, so as to reach and show something to another individual. “The way a person expresses a given aesthetic point of view or an idea they have” (Victória). “An author’s form of expression, a way in which they want to reach an individual, what they want to show by doing that to the individual” (Roberto). It is possible to observe the essence of this category in what they say here, a category in which art is a form of expression of subjectivity, so as to reach others. In comparison with the first category (living is an art), only one participant, Victória, mentioned the aesthetic character of art. Although the aesthetic character of art has also been mentioned in order to define art, a special category has not been created for it. This is because the essence of the replies of these participants did not refer to this character, but rather to others.

The third category, a means of expression and reflection, was found in just one participant. Ana says: “the way a person manages to express what they feel... being able to transmit a feeling (...) Whether this be to relax or to leave someone so tormented that they think about life (...) a way of thinking and seeing life in a different way than reality sees it”. This category relates to an understanding of art that goes beyond the category of a means of expression. In this way, Ana not only understands art as a form of the expression of subjectivity, but also indicates its quality of reflection. In this category, the participating subject understands art as also providing reflection about oneself. What Juliana, who is in the category of living is an art, says, indicates that in truth she is expressing the category of a means of expression and reflection: “A means of expressing subjectivity and getting to know oneself as well”. Nevertheless, she does not fit into this latter category, since in addition to understanding art as a form of expression and reflection, the essence of what she says is that art is a way of taking a stance in the world, indicating the category of living is an art. “Art is a means of catharsis, and principally a way of taking a stance in the world as yourself” (Juliana).

The fourth category, art as a subjective intuitive encounter, is also only found in one participant. João comments: “You sort of know it is, but it’s hard to define (...) I wouldn’t attempt to define it”. What João says regarding his definition of art revolves around a concern not to define it. In this category art is not defined by words, but rather by a subjective encounter with it. Thus, it is the subjective encounter with art which, intuitively, results in the participant perceiving that that is art.

Three categories were found in reply to the question on the relationship between dealing with difficult moments and creative artistic activity: absence of art; abstraction of difficulties and overcoming difficulties through art. The category of absence of art (Tarsila and Juliana) thinks that art, the beauty of art, is absent from life during difficult moments. It is interesting to note that it is precisely these participants who form the category of living is an art in reply to the question on the definition of art. For these participants, the beauty of living is an art and at times when they face difficulties, art and the beauty of living are absent from their lives. Tarsila says: “Art marked my life because I didn’t experience it. It’s like this, because I didn’t live that part of my childhood... like a normal child and art for me means living and living well, so I didn’t live these parts of my life well”. Indications are therefore shown that the lack of art, that is to say, the absence of beauty in their lives, represents the impossibility of living well and with quality of life.

The category of abstraction of difficulties (Luisa, João, Lara, Roberto, Victória and Rebeca) essentially sees art as a means of escaping from difficult moments. The following excerpt of what Rebeca said represents this category well: “It was precisely during that period (the period of the theatre group) that I stopped living with my father and went to live with my mother. It was rather traumatic for me, but I managed to get over it by acting (...) I was able to forget my problems on the stage”. This is a way participants find to cope with their difficulties through art, forgetting them, relaxing and calming down. “I didn’t play when I felt bad, but

when I wanted to get away from my problems, to have peace, to think about other things (...) Today when I think about all my problems, what still brings me peace is the distraction of sitting down and playing” (Luisa). The essence of this category is thus art as a form of escaping from difficult experiences.

The category of overcoming difficulties (Ana and Tatiana) refers to art as facilitating the process of overcoming difficult moments by resignifying them. “There have been times in my life when I have had to make some changes... I used to get home and try to listen always remembering good times, always trying to see how it would be from then on, that music represented a change in my life” (Ana). “Writing at difficult times there is even the possibility of you giving meaning to what you are feeling. Sometimes you see different things, things that you hadn’t seen before (...) (writing) even helps you to think better about things” (Tatiana). These excerpts indicate that artistic activity enables reflections about difficulties faced and possible changes to them. Although the category of abstraction of difficulties also indicated art as a way of facing up to difficulties, the two categories diverge as to the way this is achieved. Whereas the category of abstraction of difficulties refers to art as a way of escaping from difficult moments and forgetting them, in the category of overcoming difficulties art is presented as a possible form of reflection and resignification of such difficulties, enabling changes in relation to them. It is interesting to note that this question of the possible relationship between artistic activity and addressing difficult situations provided indications of the relevance of art in difficult moments. “(About art) No other time made such an impression as the time I mentioned before, a sad time, a time of change” (Ana).

As such it can be seen that this question enabled the differentiation of types of perception about the relationship between artistic activity and coping with difficult moments: the lack of art in a person’s life as the seeds of difficult times; art as a means of escaping from them and art as facilitating the process of overcoming them.

Five categories were found in the question about what art means to the participants: relaxation (Rebeca, Luisa, Lara and Roberto); self-discovery (Ana, Tatiana and João); completeness (Tarsila), where art is a necessary part and inherent of life; the category of authentic expression (Victória); and the category of being authentic (Juliana) in which the participant has an intrinsic relationship with art, where in essence art is a way of behaving authentically in the world.

Rebeca, Luisa, Lara and Roberto are in the first category, relaxation. In this category art is essentially a way of relaxing. Thus, the meaning of art as understood by these participants refers to the role art plays in their lives. “Art as a way of relaxing, something more pleasurable (...). Not as a profession, but rather something more pleasurable (...) I was able to forget my problems on the stage” (Rebeca). Rebeca’s words represent this category satisfactorily. The essence of the meaning of art in their lives refers to art’s role as a form of relaxation and abstraction of difficulties.

Ana, Tatiana and João are in the second category, self-discovery. The essence of what they say refers to art as a possibility of getting to know themselves better by resignifying what they feel. “It seems that sometimes art is able to feel what you are feeling. It is able to show you what’s going on in your life, I think it gives a new view of life” (Ana). “A question of my own self-discovery, knowing who I really am, finally knowing who I am, as well as being related to the question of aesthetics, what I like, what I find attractive, what touches me” (João). These statements indicate the relationship they establish with art as way of getting to know themselves.

Tarsila’s category is completeness. The meaning of art present in what Tarsila says refers to art as a necessary and constituent part of life. The following quote exemplifies this more clearly: “art is a pleasurable thing and is part of our lives, it’s impossible to think of living without art (...) art is everywhere (...) art is part of a person’s self” (Tarsila). The essence of this category is therefore found in art as a constituent and fundamental part of the participant’s life and which completes it. So much so that at the end of her interview she says: “We have to carry on living and living with art” (Tarsila).

The fourth category, authentic expression, relates to the participant Victória. The meaning of art for her life relates to the possibility art offers her to leave the commonplace behind through authentic and genuine

expression. Victória says: “it’s a way of getting away from everyday life, this mechanical way of living (...) we can do things more freely, express ourselves and do different things, leave the commonplace behind”. Whereas the category of completeness sees art as being fundamental to living, but does not see it as a possibility of getting away from the commonplace, the category of authentic expression does not have the former intention, of being fundamental to living, rather it is understood as a possibility of escaping by means of the subject’s genuine expression.

Juliana is in the fifth and final category, being authentic. This category has elements of the two preceding categories, completeness and authentic expression. The following words of Juliana indicate elements of these two categories: “Dancing for me is a way of expressing who I am (...) another way for me to take a stance in the world that is not forced upon me by my profession (...) art is life and life is art (...) art is completeness”. The category of being authentic therefore transcends the two previous categories, so that its essence is in the intrinsic relationship between the participant and art. Art is not only a form of authentic expression or completeness of life, but rather a way of taking a stance in the world, living authentically. Juliana says: “I feel that I am myself, I feel I’m unique in the stance I take before the world through art and dance”. It is noteworthy that Juliana, even though she is not an artist, has developed a relationship with art on a higher level when compared to the other participants. She spent her childhood and adolescence in the artistic world. Juliana’s different relationship with art and life when compared to the other participants may have been influenced by the higher degree of interaction she had with art.

It can be seen that even though art does not occupy a prominent position in the participant’s lives, they have different ways of being in contact with it and that all these ways are sources of pleasure. Luiza says “I think that therapy is concentrated on music and this peace that music brings, you’re doing something – you know – more than just going there and talking with the therapist, through music you acquire new things”. Roberto says “A true form of consolation, that gave me tranquillity, security”. Tatiana says “It has (meaning) in relation to leisure (...) it happens... Suddenly you think of something and begin to write, it’s natural”. This offers indications that although art is not a central aspect in the lives of several participants, even so it has meaning and plays a role in their lives, especially in relation to dealing with difficult moments.

Moreover, this study provides indications that issues surrounding the field of art can lead subjects who are not artists to a higher level of reflection. When comparing what the participants said initially with what they said afterwards, their thinking could be seen to have developed and they reflected more on these themes, expanding on what had been said initially. Tarsila, for example, initially said that art was what she liked doing: “As I see it, there are several forms of art, art using one’s body, art that human beings create... I love to dance, for me dancing is art. I love to paint, for me painting is art, I love cinema, for me films ‘are’ art”. In the case of Tarsila, for example, at a given moment in the interview the perception arises that her liking certain activities and considering them to be artistic was because, in truth, they were attractive, that is to say, here we find the question of aesthetics as being necessary for defining something as being art. “Oh, for me this is art too, the beauty of life, of people...” (Tarsila).

Many studies indicate the potential of artistic activities as a means of facilitating human development. But how does this happen? According to Welburn (2005), in the face of modernity’s crisis, Steiner writes about a different way of understanding the cognitive method. His theory of cognitive method is based on two essential characteristics of mankind, feeling and wanting, whereby thinking is allied to this process. Art appears as an essential element for the development of both of them. In his book, *The Philosophy of Freedom* (2000), Steiner starts the discussion about exactly what this cognitive method is and asks the following question: “Is man in his thoughts and actions a spiritually free being or is he subject to an inflexible natural determinism?” (2000, p.15). This is an interesting question, since as can be seen in the literature, currently creative artistic activity is used in the quest for the development of individuals who have freedom and are autonomous and creative.

Steiner (in Welburn, 2005) begins the reply to this question, developing his concept of freedom, based on his cognitive method. The freedom to which Steiner refers is the freedom to, the fruit of intuitive thinking which is inside every individual in integration with the whole. Freedom to means freedom to do something

new in relation to what already exists, denying the false freedom of, which would be the freedom of doing everything one wants to, what one wants, the freedom of the savage to act according to his impulses. As such, it can be perceived that freedom to is, in truth, freedom based on the consciousness of the internal factors that shape and influence human actions. As the fruit of consciousness, freedom to is also understood to involve responsibility. As the subject gains consciousness of the internal factors that shape the way he acts, he becomes responsible for himself. It is this responsibility derived from consciousness that brings the development of freedom in mankind. Following consciousness and the subsequent responsibility in relation to his actions, the subject is then free to act in new ways based on pre-existing reality.

Thus, for Steiner (2000) a free man is one who acts based on feeling and wanting in a conscious manner, through responsibility. When analyzing the results obtained in the study, it can be seen that the participants' contact with art leads them to a consciousness of their own actions and, in turn, to a freedom to. None of the categories of the question about the meaning of art: relaxation, self-discovery, completeness, authentic expression and being authentic, relates to the development of a freedom of, that is to say, a freedom governed by impulses.

Furthermore Steiner (2000) refutes the philosophical approaches that state that a free man is one who acts only according to his rationality or his instincts, what he feels and what he wants. "If a rational decision imposes itself equally on hunger and thirst, that is to say, without my active participation, then all that remains for me is to follow it coerced, and my freedom is an illusion" (Steiner, 2000, p.19-20). Free human action, in Steiner's view, is related to thinking, a conscious activity arising from wanting and feeling and not from the prevalence of one over the other. In this sense, in the *Aesthetic Education of Man* (2002), Schiller states that: "Man, however, can be opposed to himself in two ways: as a savage when his feelings dominate his principles, or as a barbarian, when his principles destroy his feelings... Cultivated man makes nature his friend and honours his freedom, in that he only uses reins at his own discretion" (Schiller, 2002, p.33).

The results of the study provide indications that creative artistic activity may contribute to intuitive thinking, where there must be equilibrium between wanting and feeling. Several questions have categories referring to art as making feeling possible. This can be seen, for example, in the categories of authentic expression and being authentic, in reply to what art means to the participants. Acting in an authentic manner is intrinsically related to the concept of thoughtful activity, which in turn is articulated with both what the subject feels and wants. "The cosmivision of Schiller and Goethe can only recognize for itself the opinion we indicate. It is in man himself that the starting point of his actions must be sought" (Steiner, 2004a, p.108).

It can be seen that these participants' relationship with art is fundamentally linked to ways of dealing with difficult situations. This is because art can also provoke, as the interviews show, participant self-knowledge and the resignification of what they feel at these difficult times. That is to say, contact with art develops this intuitive thinking whereby the subject becomes active in the changes in his life. He develops freedom to, the freedom to change which is fundamental in coping with difficulties. For these participants art plays such a fundamental role in facing difficulties, that when the meaning categories are analysed, it can be seen that all of them are linked to ways of dealing with difficulties, whether this be by abstracting their problems, self-discovery, completeness, authentic expression or being authentic.

Final considerations

This study provides indications that art makes it possible to deal with difficulties through the development of intuitive thinking. This is because, by stimulating observation and thought articulated with feeling and wanting, creative artistic activity enables the development of consciousness and, in this way, the possibility of freedom.

Furthermore, it can be seen that more attention should be given to artistic activity in the educational context (Stoltz; Weger, 2012). Art also demonstrates its role in the development of subjects who are not artists. When returning to the discussions on the current state of education (Duarte Jr., 2010), regarding the

overriding importance placed on the rational, art provides the possibility of developing a form of thinking that is experienced, allied to feeling and wanting.

As such, these results indicate the importance of new studies into creative artistic activity as a possibility for dealing with difficult times, following the theoretical framework of Goethe, Schiller and Steiner, so as to contribute to the discussions on the therapeutic process.

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