

The Broader Context of Pictorial Expression

It has gained fresh momentum, since the programme also functions as a research workshop, thereby contributing to the training of the next generation of researchers in the field and to the creation of new methods, studies, collections and publications.

A sign of the progressive outlook of the pictorial-expression-psychology programme is that it teaches the systems-oriented paradigm of the psychology of pictorial expression rather than the Machoverian tradition. Its aim is not to train art therapists, but to teach the interpretation of pictorial language. The subjects taught include the history of expression psychology, the methodology of research in expression psychology, systems-oriented and communicational picture analysis, formal-structural analysis, colour psychology, the classic and the special drawing tests, the dynamic examination of drawings, the pictorial expression of specific clinical disorders, the traditional and special family drawings, and the analysis of non-figurative works and scribble tests. Alongside classroom sessions, fieldwork takes place at current exhibitions, where the application of the SSCA to the fine arts is also practised. The students read the professional literature continuously and collect drawings, which they first assess independently and then have evaluated through group supervision. A mark of the calibre of the graduating students is that they present their own research at scientific conferences, for example Zsolt Antos (Antos and Vass, 2011), Judit Dóra (Dóra et al., 2010, 2011), Enikő Molnár (2010; Molnár et al., 2009), Éva Pollák (2009, 2010a, 2010b), Enikő Szabados (2010, 2011), Marianna Takács (2010) and others.

The current interest in the psychology of pictorial expression is shown by the fact that, up to April 2011, 1,209 participants had completed the courses listed above.

1.3.3. The relationship of the psychology of pictorial expression to its sister disciplines

The transdisciplinarity of the field

When examining the relationship of the psychology of pictorial expression to its sister disciplines, two observations must be made: (a) at the level of the scientific field, the psychology of pictorial expression is transdisciplinary, whereas (b) at the level of its practitioners it is an interdisciplinary branch of science.

The psychology of pictorial expression can be regarded as transdisciplinary because of the methodologies shared across the disciplines and because of the universal, discipline-spanning nature of the concept of the "picture". The picture, as Hárđi (2002, p. 5) for instance defines it, is "one of humankind's most ancient possessions, older even than the word". It is readily apparent that the subject matter of the psychology of pictorial expression in the traditional sense (see chapter 1.1.1) does not fit within a single discipline, but is located somewhere between the individual disciplines, extending beyond their boundaries. This is also borne out by the fact that the international congresses of the psychology of pictorial expression are attended by representatives of various fields (for example psychiatrists and practitioners of other medical disciplines, psychologists, art historians, fine artists,

craftspeople, teachers, speech therapists and art therapists), who conduct a dialogue in which they give equal weight to one another's points of view and bring their respective disciplinary knowledge into relation with each other.

In the light of the above, it is evident that not only the traditional subject matter of the psychology of pictorial expression (pictorial expression), but also the subject matter defined in a new way in the first chapter (namely the transactions between the elements of the four-component hermeneutic system), cannot be uncovered through disciplinary, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary research. At the same time, the individual disciplines (for example art history or psychology) are enriched with new insights if they regard the psychology of pictorial expression as a transdisciplinary field.

The interdisciplinarity referred to in the first paragraph characterises the practitioners of the psychology of pictorial expression in the sense that they are typically highly trained experts in one particular field, who study and apply the subject matter or methods of other disciplines, but who, as individuals, mostly remain within the single scientific field corresponding to their basic training and commitment. Through their insights, however, they contribute to the transdisciplinary aim of understanding pictorial expression, which thereby ultimately becomes a transdisciplinary science.

Terminological questions

In discussing the relationship of the psychology of pictorial expression to its sister disciplines, we cannot avoid the question of its name. The naming of the field in fact raises two problems: (a) is the psychology of pictorial expression a psychology, and (b) the multiplicity of names.

(a) The first problem is connected with the transdisciplinarity discussed above: the term "psychology" in the name is, in our view, misleading, because it presents the field as a branch of psychology, which imposes disciplinary constraints that hinder its development. The problem is similar to the one with which environmental psychology also struggles. Dúll (2009, p. 65) writes of this as follows: "[...] in reality environmental psychology is not even a psychology in the true sense of the word. In its framing of problems and its lines of inquiry it can be regarded as a psychology, but in its methods and outlook (and given its large number of non-psychologist representatives) it cannot be."

(b) The other problem connected with naming is that the literature does not use only a single term to denote the scientific study of pictorial expression, and moreover alternates between the terms inconsistently. To date no publication has appeared that would bring order to this terminological confusion. This holds equally for the foreign-language and the Hungarian-language literature, and for the names

of professional organisations, conferences and journals. The psychology of pictorial expression has, for example, no journal that would represent and define the scientific field through its name and that the scientific community of the psychology of pictorial expression would uniformly accept. The central society of the psychology of pictorial expression, SIPE (Société Internationale de Psychopathologie de l'Expression et d'Art-thérapie), for instance, launched its official journal under the title *Confinia Psychiatrica*. A great variety of expressions can likewise be found in the names of the English, French and German publications, organisations and institutions dealing with the field. As an example, a short list (numerous further organisations can be found on the SIPE website and in its newsletter):

Akademie für Künstlerische Therapien; American Projective Drawing Institute; American Society for the Psychopathology of Expression; Ateliers d'Expression et d'Art-Thérapie; Deutschsprachige Gesellschaft für Psychopathologie des Ausdrucks; Institut National d'Expression, de Création, d'Art et de Thérapie; Société Française de Psychopathologie de l'Expression; The Japanese Society of Psychopathology of Expression and Art Therapy.

The common element of the names, by which one can recognise that their presence in the SIPE register is no accident, is *expression* (expression, *Ausdruck*) and, at times, *therapy*.^[^3]

The Hungarian name for the field is similarly problematic: the publications refer to it as *kifejezéspatológia* (expression pathology), *kifejezés-pszichopatológia* (expression psychopathology), *kifejezéspszichológia* (expression psychology), and even *rajzpszichológia* (drawing psychology) and *kifejezésterápia* (expression therapy). Even the already mentioned section of the Hungarian Psychiatric Association appears in the official documents sometimes as the Section of Expression Pathology and sometimes as the Section of Expression Psychopathology and Art Therapy.

A solution to the two problems listed above that would be accepted by the community of the scientific field is still awaited. Consciously taking responsibility for all this, in the present volume we use the term *the psychology of pictorial expression* throughout.

A review of the related scientific fields

At the beginning of the chapter we described the psychology of pictorial expression as a field whose subject matter and methods are also connected to other disciplines, typically in a transdisciplinary sense. Surveying the conference abstracts and the publications dealing with the field (see Vass, 2007c), the following fields (disciplines and their especially significant subfields) must by all means be listed, without any claim to completeness: psychiatry, special-needs education, pedagogy, neurology, genetics, aesthetics and experimental aesthetics,

^[^3]: This is partly why the discussion of expressive behaviour was given a central role in the first chapter.

cultural history, art history (for example the history of styles, iconology, iconography, the sociology of art), systems theory, psychotherapy (psychoanalysis, art therapy and the therapeutic use of art, occupational therapy, dance and movement therapy, music therapy, occupational therapy and activity therapy, family therapy and various group therapies), mental health, rehabilitation, and psychodiagnostics.

Within psychology, there is a methodological overlap, or an overlap touching the research area, with almost every branch and field (the psychology of art, clinical psychology, child psychology, work and organisational psychology, criminal psychology, prison psychology, educational and school psychology, advertising psychology, environmental psychology, social psychology, etc.).

Among the results of research in the psychology of pictorial expression, Pickford (1975) highlights the field of psychodiagnostics (including nosological classification and intra-individual problems), psychotherapy (the understanding of pictorial products created during art therapies and other therapies), art history (for example recurring motifs, the role of the unconscious, surrealism and expressionism, abstract painting, pathographies) and the psychology of art (creativity, artistic inspiration, the psychodynamic processes of the artist, the effects of the unconscious).

Hárdi (2002) distinguishes psychological, therapeutic, preventive and aesthetic aspects, and highlights the field's connections with psychiatry and the history of psychiatry, with psychoanalysis, art therapy, psychodiagnostics, child psychology, the psychology of art and mental health, which have led to the mutual development of the individual fields.

In summary, the chapter has described the psychology of pictorial expression as a transdisciplinary field at the level of the scientific field, but as an interdisciplinary branch of science at the level of its practitioners. It regarded it as transdisciplinary because of the methodologies shared across the disciplines and the universal, discipline-spanning nature of the concept of the "picture", and as interdisciplinary in the sense that its scholars are typically specialists in one particular field who apply the subject matter or methods of other disciplines, but who mostly remain within the scientific field corresponding to their commitment. With regard to the name *the psychology of pictorial expression*, the chapter made the critical observation that the term presents this considerably broader field as a branch of psychology, thereby imposing constraints that hinder its development. The literature, moreover, uses several terms inconsistently to denote the same field. In conclusion, we listed related disciplines and subfields, adding that within psychology there is a methodological overlap, or an overlap touching the subject of research, with almost every branch and field.

1.3.4. An outlook: application and future prospects

Frequency of application^[^4]

Within psychology, the methods of the psychology of pictorial expression have been among the most widespread assessment instruments since their appearance. In 1961 Sundberg reported that the human figure drawing test was the second most frequently used assessment procedure among the 62 tests used in the USA. Ten years after Sundberg's survey, Lubin et al. (1971) found Machover's Draw-A-Person test in fourth place among the 72 most frequent tests, and the House-Tree-Person test in eighth place. According to Brown and McGuire (1976), the Draw-A-Person test stood in first-to-second place in the examination of children, and in fourth place in the case of adolescents and adults. In the 1980s the Draw-A-Person test was the sixth and the House-Tree-Person test the eighth most frequently used test (Piotrowski et al., 1985). According to the American and Canadian surveys, drawing examination is most frequently applied in hospital psychotherapy outpatient clinics and in institutions caring for the intellectually disabled (Lubin et al., 1985). In Switzerland, two of the three most frequent tests are drawing tests; in keeping with the German-speaking region, these are Koch's Tree Test and the Wartegg Test (Lang and Stoll, 1976). A similar situation is found in Germany (Schober, 1977), with the difference that the much-reprinted Animal Family Drawing is highly popular (Brem-Gräser, 1957).

Among the advantages of projective drawings, therapists highlight the unique responses and the importance of the insight gained into the deep layers of the personality (61.5% of respondents), while among the disadvantages they mention the problem of reliability and validity (60.0%) and the time required for evaluation (21.9%). Wade and Baker's study also points out why clinicians prefer projective tests: they disregard the reliability and validity problems because (1) they feel that their own experience is more important than the professional literature, and (2) they consider psychometric studies to be remote from life, poorly designed, and to employ a method that is inadequately atomistic in relation to the complexity of projective tests (cf. Fisher, 1959). Clinicians devote a significant part of their time to testing (Fein, 1979). According to the data, 31% of therapists spend at least a quarter of their time administering tests (Piotrowski et al., 1985). Of the tests, therapists recommend that psychology students learn projective tests with a roughly 30% greater frequency than objective tests; according to Wade and Baker (1977) and Wade et al. (1978), drawing examination ranks seventh among the recommended tests.

^[^4]: Drawing on the review by Vass (2007c).

Occupational fields and institutions

Knowledge of the psychology of pictorial expression is typically applied by representatives of the following occupational fields:^[^5] teacher, psychologist, development teacher, family-support teacher, special-needs teacher, speech therapist, paediatrician, child psychiatrist, social pedagogue, clergyman, art teacher, conductor (Pető method), qualified healthcare professional and social worker (the list is not exhaustive).

The field's body of practical knowledge is applied in those areas, organisations and institutions where education, development, training, re-education, correction, healing and rehabilitation take place, and where, in the course of this, professionals make use of human interventions in their work. These include institutions providing child-psychological and pedagogical services, complex specialist-service institutes, child- and youth-protection authorities, pedagogical centres, speech-therapy specialist services and speech-correction institutes, early development centres, careers-guidance advisory services, family-support centres, family-protection and mental-health services, human-services centres, child-welfare services, pedagogical specialist-service centres, special-needs-education institutions (development and prevention), the national network of educational counselling services, the Expert Committees for Assessing Learning Abilities, the mobile special-needs specialist services, the regional family-support centres, social-care centres, as well as those institutions where boarding-school and children's-home education, art education, after-school care and study-room activities take place. Among the institutions employing professionals who work with adults, one must list psychiatric institutions and care facilities, rehabilitation institutions, therapeutic institutions for people with addictions, special-needs-education institutions, institutions for physically and intellectually disabled young people and adults, and geriatric institutions.

Typical questions and problems

The professionals of the fields listed put knowledge of the psychology of pictorial expression to use for the purposes of primary and secondary prevention and screening, in cases of behavioural and adjustment problems, in disorders of the emotional and affective life, and in cases of learning and performance disorders, where a child's performance remains below his abilities, as well as in questions connected with the assessment of school readiness.

From a thematic point of view, the traditional fields of application of the psychology of pictorial expression are the assessment of certain areas of personality structure and personality dynamics, for example ego strength, the types of defence mechanisms, the general mode of adaptation,

^[^5]: The transdisciplinary research results of the field are also put to use by the related scientific fields. These disciplines and subfields were discussed in chapter 1.3.3.

reality testing, affective functioning, fantasy functioning, field dependence, types of conflict, sexual identity, regression, and the examination of motivations, needs, interpersonal and object relations, aggression, dependence and creativity. Among the classic areas of application are the examination of traumas and neurotic conflicts, the self-image and the body schema, intellectual maturity, cognitive development, the relationship to parents and family, the establishment of physical or sexual abuse of children, attachment to parents and questions of child custody, the monitoring of the course of psychiatric illnesses, the examination of various drug effects, the assessment of organic brain changes, the demonstration of the decline of cognitive functions, the localisation of psychosomatic symptoms, and the examination of group processes, group structure, group values and social attitudes.

The methods of the psychology of pictorial expression are applied as a supplement to psychotherapy (King, 1954) or as independent art therapy (Naumburg, 1950; Navratil, 1965/1996; Vasarhelyi, 1996), especially among psychoanalysts representing the Jungian orientation (Jacobi, 1969; Riedel, 1988, 1992); for monitoring the course of psychiatric illnesses (Navratil and Hennig, 1959; Suchenwirth, 1967; Hárđi, 1965, 1967, 1983; Vass and Nagy, 2008); for examining various drug effects, such as psychotropic, neuroleptic, tranquillising and thymoleptic treatment (Navratil et al., 1961; Suchenwirth, 1967; Bitter, 1982); and for examining organic brain changes (Bieliauskas and Kirkham, 1958; Suchenwirth, 1965; Welman, 1968) or the decline of cognitive functions (Shulman et al., 1986; Hárđi et al., 1996). The drawing is also used as a non-verbal instrument for localising pain (Oas, 1985; Lándal and Udén, 1988; Peek and Sawyer, 1988; O'Donnell and Curley, 1985). Drawing tests are also used for such specific examinations as the assessment of school readiness (Baldwin, 1950; Ames and Ilg, 1963; Gutezeit and Gross-Selbeck, 1974), the establishment of sexual abuse of children (Blain et al., 1981; Bruening et al., 1997; Burgess and Hartman, 1993; Cohen-Liebman, 1995), or child-custody proceedings, where the court compulsorily orders an examination of the child's attachment to the parents (Hajnal, 1995).

We also find drawings used as a supplementary assessment instrument in the psychological approach to particular problems. To mention a few: the diagnosis of encopresis and enuresis (Loney, 1971); the recognition of dyslexia (Pontius, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984) and of burnout (Haack and Jones, 1983); the examination of aphasia (Hatfield and Zangwill, 1974); the self-image of children with leukaemia (Clunies-Ross and Lansdown, 1988); the effect of stimulus deprivation in orphanage children (Cramer, 1972; Prytula and Leigh, 1972) and in the children of sailors living aboard ship (Höhn, 1974); the personality changes of patients with chronic kidney disease (Lohmann and Teuwsen, 1974) and of dialysed patients (Perkins et al., 1983); the cultural history of suicide (van Hooff, 1994) and the signalling of suicidal risk (Bobon and Goffioul, 1964; Harrower et al., 1975; Honig, 1975; Virshup, 1976; Pfeffer and Richman, 1991; Bakó, 1992).

Future prospects and lines of development

By extrapolating the foreseeable trend lines of the development of the psychology of pictorial expression (Vass, 1996, 1998c, 2003a, 2006, 2011d), the future prospects and expected development of the field can be outlined. The psychology of pictorial expression wishes to become an ever more well-defined science, and to provide explanations, through its theories, for an ever greater number of observations. It wishes to expand further the repertoire of its assessment methods (its tests) and, with these tests, to give ever better explanations of the picture and its creator, of health and illness, of creativity and art.

Owing to the universal interest in the child, rooted in evolution, the children's drawing is expected to remain a popular area, whereas the psychiatric strand of the psychology of pictorial expression, the study of the pictures of psychiatric patients, is gradually losing ground. Although it is hard to believe that psychiatric illnesses will disappear, the spectacular phenomenology of the pictures has already begun to fade as a result of the development of psychiatry and pharmacology and the increasingly early, increasingly rapid and effective treatment of illnesses. Illnesses will have ever less time to manifest themselves, and the special forms of pictorial expression will be ever less observable.

In the psychology of pictorial expression, computer-based analysis is becoming ever more important, with the further spread and development of the internet and of computers. As in other scientific fields, data, tools and publications will become ever more easily accessible and publishable, which will further accelerate the process of scientific research and the communication of results.

The transdisciplinarity of the psychology of pictorial expression is increasing; the scholars of the field make contact with one another ever more easily, for example bridging linguistic and geographical problems by information-technology means. The accelerating communication and flow of information is taking the field out of the hands of psychiatry and psychology; the cooperation of researchers belonging to different scientific fields is becoming far closer. Although new insights reach the other scholars more quickly, it will become ever harder to cope with the growing richness and complexity of the information.

In empirical research, the traditional method of data collection is expected to remain, namely that researchers collect ever more pictorial material through individual and group examinations, primarily from children, patients and artists.

Summarising the above, the sources of the development of the psychology of pictorial expression (and at the same time its challenges) can be sought in the following factors: (a) the growth and renewal of the empirical material, (b) the expansion of the medium and the "conquest" of the border areas, (c) the exploratory drive, (d) the adoption of new theories from elsewhere and the birth of independent explanations, and (e) the durability of the therapeutic and diagnostic aspects.

(a) Just as an infinite variety of music can be born from musical tones and intervals, so too the pictorial works created by children and by artists always renew themselves; they never "run out", stimulating the field constantly and always in a different way. Children always draw new pictures, and painters will

continue to paint. The tools and the medium will change, but the drive to create the picture will remain.

(b) Owing to the expansion of the medium, the psychology of pictorial expression is expected to extend beyond the picture and to take possession ever more fully of the border areas. In this way it will broaden its subject matter, its methods and its explanations.

(c) The viewer will continue not to understand the picture at first glance, yet he will always be curious about it. This exploratory drive provides ever-renewing motivational energy for the search for psychological explanations of pictures, whether the person's own pictures or pictures created by others are concerned.

(d) In the spirit of transdisciplinarity, further theories will be carried over from other fields into the field of pictorial expression, and moreover the accumulating knowledge will also generate independent theories, which will explain ever more of those aspects of the psychology of pictorial expression that we do not see today or are unable to distinguish.

(e) The human soul is so complex an entity that there will always be a need for psychotherapy. The career of art therapy continues, setting ever new riddles. Further diagnostic and test methods are born, which make ever more targeted application possible.

The chapter has dealt with the application and the expected development of the psychology of pictorial expression. According to the surveys, the methods of the psychology of pictorial expression have been among the most widespread assessment instruments since their appearance. As justification, clinicians cite the unique responses and the importance of the insight gained into the deep layers of the personality. The psychology of pictorial expression is, however, applied not only by psychologists but also by other occupational fields (which the chapter has listed). Put in general terms, the field's body of practical knowledge is applied in those institutions where education, development, training, re-education, correction, healing and rehabilitation take place, alongside the use of human interventions. Professionals put knowledge of the psychology of pictorial expression to use, for example, with children for purposes of primary and secondary prevention, and in various screening examinations.

The future prospects of the psychology of pictorial expression can be outlined to a certain extent on the basis of the developmental trends. In summary, we may say that the psychology of pictorial expression wishes to become an ever more well-defined science and, through its theories, to provide explanations for an ever greater number of observations. It also wishes to expand further the repertoire of its assessment methods, and, with its tests, to give ever better explanations of the picture and its creator, of health and illness, of creativity and art.