

Conference Paper

Creativity As a Way to New Literacy Realization

Anastasia Bulatova, Nadezda Zhuravleva, and Svetlana Melnikova

PhD., Ural Federal University, Ekaterinburg, Russia

Abstract

This article is a synthetic study of creativity, based on research in the field of psychological, pedagogical and aesthetic scientific works. The urgency of the concept of "creativity" is reflected upon, since it is different from the concept of "createness" in that there is a shift of the public interest from the spontaneous and self-appraised self-expression to the commercially determined and purposeful performance of orders. We understand creativity as a property of every person, this property can be improved by everybody. Creativity is not so much a special talent, as the possession of a set of operations that allow the individual to recombine knowledge. Creativity becomes a universal competence, a new literacy because it involves the mastering of thinking mechanisms as technical tools. In this regard, creativity refers to a new product which is neither a work of art, nor scientific theory, nor religious dogma. The article includes analysis of a conflict situation, which took place on the Biennale in Shiryaevo. The source of the conflict lay in the differing understandings of artistic jobs and creative jobs by artists and curators. The case was documented and presented at the exhibition "Local" in the Center of Contemporary Art (Yekaterinburg), dated April-May 2019.

Keywords: creativeness, creativity, post-literacy, post-modernism, creative class

Corresponding Author:

Svetlana Melnikova
Meln-svetlana@mail.ru

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1. Introduction

Creativity today is a trendy and often used concept, and the definition "creativity" is included in the daily vocabulary of almost everyone. Despite the obvious synonymy ("creativity" is the English equivalent of the Russian word "творчество"), creativeness and creativity are used in different contexts with a different meaning. Jovilė Barevičiūtė notes that creativity is more associated with the individual's psychological type, one's personal qualities, way of thinking, the ability to find original solutions, whereas creativeness reveals itself in human activity. A creative person is the one who is able to create, invent something new, that is, to make a contribution to a certain sphere of culture or science [1].

According to Richard Florida, modernity can be characterized as a "creative age," "...we now have an economy powered by human creativity. Creativity... is now the decisive source of competitive advantage" [2]. He formulates his thoughts as "...taking

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people who would once have been viewed as bizarre mavericks operating at the bohemian fringe and setting them at the very heart of the process of innovation and economic growth <...> as the fundamental source of creativity, people are the critical resource of the new age” [2]. The “creative age” is marked by the appearance of a person who can create various significant forms. According to Florida, the core of the creative class is people engaged in those areas, where new technologies and new meanings are created. He added, «In the past two and a half decades, this shift has taken us from the older industrial model to a new economic paradigm, where knowledge, innovation, and creativity are the key. At the cutting edge of this shift is the creative sector of the economy: science and technology, art and design, culture and entertainment, and the knowledge-based professions» [3]. The economy becomes the basis of the creative class, and the “creativity” itself is intertwined with pragmatism and the desire to extract from its application the monetary equivalent. For Florida, «However, it is important to point out that my theory recognizes creativity as a fundamental and intrinsic human characteristic. In a very real sense, all human beings are creative and all are potentially members of the creative class” [4]. Margaret Boden in the book *Creative Mind* notes that as these very diverse examples suggest, creativity enters into virtually every aspect of life. It’s not a special ‘faculty’ but an aspect of human intelligence in general: in other words, it’s grounded in everyday abilities such as conceptual thinking, perception, memory, and reflective self-criticism. So it isn’t confined to a tiny elite: every one of us is creative, to a degree” [5]. Moreover, “creativity draws crucially on our ordinary abilities. Noticing, remembering, seeing, speaking, hearing, understanding language, and recognizing analogies: all these talents of Everyman are important. So, it is our ability to rewrite our existing procedural skills on successive representational levels, so that we can transform them in various ways” [5].

As creativity doesn’t contain any exclusivity, but its value is so high in the modern culture, then it is necessary to study creativity as a human ability and to develop creative thinking methods as well as techniques of creative products making.

2. Methodology

Creativity is not a unique ability, therefore we can study creativity as an ordinary feature of human beings and look for an algorithm of creativity to find a method which will help to develop creative thinking and obtain creative products. As V. Asakavičiūtė noticed, “A creative process is related to human personality and his whole life. This process as the self-development of one’s personality is life-long. Therefore, existential creativity is

more than certain human abilities, a way of thinking or ultimate results. It is a human being's innermost self, a way of life, the continuous self-development of his personality as well as the widening of cultural environment" [6].

An extensive study of the phenomenon of creativity begins with the 60s of the last century and this is not accidental. The formation of the concept takes place in the field of psychology and pedagogy, since they study the human creativity. The term "creativity" is used not as a synonym for creative, but as a separate word corresponding to a different from artistic sense - making art - sphere. In case of creativity, the interest lies in studying mental procedures that can be described as "invention". Genry Altshuller's (USSR, 1960s) theory of inventing tasks solving is the example of relevant scientific search. Genius, as an individual psychological and intellectual endowment, became the object of research, but what was its aim? The aim was to discover universal principles of creative activity. They would allow solving the most important practical problems – to develop methods of enhancing creativity and algorithms of creative solutions.

There are different aspects of creativity, for instance subject, operative, productive, but all of them are complementary. We use the findings of Joy Paul Guilford and Allis Paul Torrance, who not only investigated creative potential, but also diagnosed it. Sarnoff A. Mednick, the author of the technique that determines creative abilities with the help of verbal associations, also provides a good experience in creativity analyses. Psychometrics of D. Gilford and E. Torrance is directed not at the subconscious and intuition (insight), but at cognitive procedures which leads to the original solution of the problem. Original solution could be produced by divergent thinking, which is based on associative thinking. Divergent thinking is often perceived as congenial creativity and on this basis is opposed to convergent thinking, which requires knowledge of existing algorithms for solving the problem. Gilford believes that ability concentrates in the categories of divergent thinking, since they are the most visible there [7], and he highlights another components in the structure of intelligence: memory, productive convergent thinking, "operating with systems, numbers, logical procedures", and evaluation skills. A. Torrance uses and adopts the Gilford's approach for creative skills testing, but he adds the markers of figurative and verbal creativity. Torrance emphasizes that diagnosis is not the main aim, but only a necessary step towards solving the task of teaching [8]. So, creative mental operations are the means of productive professional activity. S. Mednick defines creativity as the process of recombining elements in new combinations that meets some special requirements, especially the requirement of usefulness [9]. Creativity is based on the ability to go beyond stereotypical associations and to work with a broad semantic field. Transformation and transcoding are universal

procedures applicable to different types of information. The use of them helps not to limit creativity only to the sphere of artistic works or scientific search. Creativity is not only a gift, but a certain set of skills allowing recombining knowledge for making an original product in any field of life.

Humanistic psychology expands the "inventive" field of creative skills to human interaction with the world. Creativity helps with personal growth. According to Maslow, "Creativity helps a healthy personality to express himself. Traces of that can be found in any activity self-actualized person, the most ordinary, in the removed from the creativeness in the usual sense of the word" [10].

M. Boden examines these types of creativity: combinational, exploratory and transformational. She writes that «creativity is the ability to come up with ideas and artifacts that are new, surprising and valuable" [5]. Besides, she emphasizes psychological and historical creativity, "What you might do – and what I think you should do in this situation – is make a distinction between 'psychological' creativity and 'historical' creativity (P-creativity and H-creativity, for short). P-creativity involves coming up with a surprising, valuable idea that's new to the person who comes up with it. It doesn't matter how many people have had that idea before. But if a new idea is H-creative, that means that (so far as we know) no one else has had it before: it has arisen for the first time in human history" [5].

Creativity is the possession of a set of intellectual operations and it allows for recombination of knowledge, acquiring new one. In the modern information culture it becomes a universal competence, new literacy that involves as well the possession of mental procedures as technical tools for their implementation. "In the broad sense and in science in general, including the pedagogical linguistic science, literacy today denotes the presence of knowledge and skills in various socially significant areas that determine the level of adaptation of a citizen to life in society" [11, 12]. Our understanding of creativity allows us to consider it as a phenomenon of post-literacy. Post-literacy is "the situation of simultaneous existence of different interpretations of literacy, different spheres of implementation and different literacy products, meaningful access to socially important information" [13].

The coexistence of the logo centric book's culture with information culture and the inevitable displacement of the first one, has been already diagnosed by McLuhan, the author of the concept of post-literacy, "We are also experiencing a moment of interaction of competing cultures: the old book European culture and the culture of the new – digital" [13].

The role of digital technologies is not only their ability to discover and to save information in a different way like they do in the "old European book culture". They give an opportunity to create specific literacy products with such parameters as multimodality and polycoding. This opportunity comes with a wide spread of technical devices that helps to combine incongruous.

Creative approach is possible in both "new" and "old" activities, at any skill, while the required level of professionalism is constantly reduced. Digital technology assists in making a creative product without the stage of "craft" skills which requires a long-term formation. Teaching procedures, which are necessary for making creative products, become easier to access and are carried out with digital technologies [14]. There are no clear criteria for the quality of "creativity" except the money or public recognition in the form of "likes" and "shares".

Self-expression is valuable and possible and desirable for each man in any social roles. Creativity is encouraged by society. "A creative person gets the value of 'a socially recognized person', and creativity is considered as a value recognized by the society» [15]. Professions related to the creation of new technologies and senses are prestigious and well paid. But creativity characterizes not only those people who have creative jobs of artists or poets, it also relates to every person. In this case, the term marks the situation of consumption as self-expression and self-actualization (A. Maslow).

Creativity can hardly be defined by standard characteristics. V. Asakavičiūtė writes that "creativity as a complex phenomenon has many manifestations, therefore it is defined by different aspects drawing on different criteria and scientific perspectives". We can definitely say that "four essential aspects of creativity are pointed out: personality, process, product, and environment. These aspects are interconnected and originally interpreted and investigated. These four aspects allow one to understand the whole of creativity as well as factors which form and determine it" [6].

A desire not just to consume, but to self-express through the consumption of a particular brand, combining the numerous variants in any sphere of entertainment and recreation, clothes and interior design, music and travel, etc. became a strategy for many our contemporaries. Encouragement of the individual to involve in a creative activity has one more reason. Self-actualization in the process of consumption and daily practices reduces the degree of social tension, taking and redirecting creative energy.

3. Analysis

The issue of "creativity" concept is acutely felt in the traditionally creative space of artistic activity, where the product cannot be the sum of parts, combined or recombined, ordered by a customer, for whom success is not equivalent to commercial profit, and the impact effect cannot be calculated like in an advertisement [16].

Therefore, modern artistic practices do not come from the concept of "artwork", but give the results of the artist's work the names "project", "action", in which they can be identified with the results of the work of the designer, creator of advertising, popularizer of science, etc. Resistance of artists to this process became a trend, and the boundaries of art are reconsidered.

As an example, we will consider a case of the mismatch of "creative" and "creativity", which provoked a conflict at the 2016 Biennale in Shiryaevo, near Samara. The case was documented and presented at the exhibition "Locals" in the Center of Contemporary Art (Yekaterinburg), dated April-May 2019. The authors of this project are artists from ZKP group Anna and Vitaly Cherepanovs. The work was a one-day action "Only Beautiful", and the related documents were: a series of collages "Gesture of Curators"; the project "Where is the money flowing?", including a sculpture of epoxy resin and money, video performances "Absorption" in which artists "eat" money and cover it with epoxy adhesive, the installation "The throne of Elena Razina, victim of fraudulent artists"; the installation "Checks from real investments in art"; project documentation and accompanying texts.

The conflict began when Anna and Vitaly Cherepanovs refused to make their announced project ("The path"), for which they had got money (10000 rubles) from the curators Nelya and Roman Korzhov. Cherepanov-group described the situation as follows:

"When artists penetrated into the environment and the context of the Biennale, they clearly realized that the idea (according to the plan of the organizers) was incarnated in a certain product, which had to be destroyed next day after demonstration. The real consequence (at the end of the Biennale) in the material world can be only cash checks, the artifacts of the destroyed ideas. The checks were necessary for operating the cultural process" [17].

The artists abandoned the original plan and took up to another one, which originated spontaneously. The artists decided to optimize the process from an economic point of view, to make it more profitable and humane, i.e. to exclude purchasing, processing and destruction of the materials, and to take cash checks for the sum of 10,000 Rubles from

the nearest store. The copies of the checks could be glued to the existing objects placed in the village during the nomadic show. The originals must be provided to accountants. Thus, the sum of money received from the curators could be transferred to the account of the gallery "Kubiva" (Nizhny Tagil) [17].

The Biennale in Shiryaevo was named "Cash" [18]. The artists decided to interpret this name in a manipulative sense ("black cash"), linking it with artistic work (paid "cash"). They described a new concept including the estimation of an artist's work, "At all levels the artist is suspected in quackery, dishonesty, and 'fraud'. Common people, viewers, curators, critics, other artists - everyone suspects an artist of deception, insolvency, self-disclosure, falsehood, stupidity, etc. And the artist's inner work is the same: constant control over his every step, utterance, thought, and therefore constant self-suspicion of impurity of thoughts. After all, the product of the artist is, was and will be more and more non-quantifiable, not measurable, not material, ephemeral, and philosophical, and going beyond the visibility and tangibility" [17].

The Biennale is similar to a factory where the functions of the participants are debugged at all levels. Here, the artist inevitably falls into the factory-type system and has to play the role of a hired worker and fulfill the order on time according to the given drawings. He turns into a functionary of art, limited by the order and forced to constantly justify that the artist is not a fraud, but art is not quackery. The Cherepanovs' work was at the peak of this clash of hard responsibilities and free will of the artist. They describe their task in this way, "In an attempt to express art within the Biennale (declared as "ideal" environment for this), artists, like the theme "cash", reveal the conflict between the desire to build trust among people and survive in the new rules of the total market network" [17].

Equating "creation" with "creativity" devalues it, because, as the authors explained, "an artist is forced to cultivate a "show", reducing the content of art to an entertaining function and visual realization" [17].

Contrary to the plans and will of the curators, Anna and Vitaliy Cherepanovs implemented their project, insisting that art is not creativity, it is an act, an action, a message in which real-world things, entering the context of an art-work, begin to sound in a new way. However, the protest against the "creativity" took place using creative techniques: dismantling one project, constructing another from the improvised material, responding to the curators with their own arguments, creating a collapsible "sculpture", attracting an accidentally met girl as a spectator, and making an argument that everything can bring a profit - all this resembles the combinatorial technique of creativity, building a message from the fragments of the existing world of things and meanings. The literacy

of these artists is different than that of the traditional ones, who use inspiration as a necessary element of creation, making a fundamentally new thing that has not existed in the world before.

4. Results

The authors of the project use another approach to creative work in comparison with traditional artists who seek for inspiration. A creative idea is the basis for artistic solution, which, using a witty metaphor, objectifies matter. When the artists resist institutions and defend their rights to self-expression, they demonstrate a new competence – creativity. The ability to recombine and recode means, to work in extensive semantic field becomes a professional skill as well as that of drawing. Modern artists who are in a situation of post-literacy need the rules and mastery of classical art, as well as creative thinking methods. The last becomes the basis of creative reputation and help to get public recognition and commercial success.

5. Conclusion

The concept "creativity" reflects the shift of the meaning towards instrumental literacy, which is combined with pragmatism and self-actualization of a personality. In the post-literacy era, creativity is a universal competence of modern human beings.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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