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## **Creativity – Vice or Virtue?: A Study of Different Visions of Creativity**

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### *Summary*

This essay is about ‘creativity’ and the way it is perceived in modern western society. Most people tend to see creativity in a rather simple fashion as something positive, and in view of its benefits for the individual, for culture and for society, it is generally agreed that creativity should be given a more prominent role. However, in a modern, globalized society this ‘angelic’ view can present a misleading picture of the phenomenon. So what is its role and how should it be reconceptualized? The author takes two different ideological visions of creativity, a progressive, humane and democratic view in contrast to a market-led economic one. Paradoxically as it may be, these two opposing visions share much of the same rhetoric and the author attempts to strip away some of the confusing layers that mask these positions. Mrnarević shows that the value of creativity is shifting from a traditional humanistic and cultural model to serve the new economic doctrine. It is believed that this shift is unwise since it ignores other aspects of creativity, which are of vital importance for society if it is constructively to deal with pressing issues that challenge it, such as reducing economic inequalities and other effects of a competition-based culture.

*Keywords:* the politics of creativity, progressive vs. economic vision of creativity, economic inequalities

### **Introduction**

This essay\*\* is about ‘creativity’ and the way it is perceived in modern western society. Firstly I examine the areas of agreement between scholars who have explored ideas of creativity and then I take two ideological visions of creativity, a progressive, humane and democratic view in contrast to a market-led economic view. These vi-

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sions are very intertwined because they share much of the same rhetoric, but I will show they are very different. This essay, after broadly considering different constructs of creativity, will attempt to strip away some of the confusing layers that mask these opposing positions. It is generally agreed that, in view of its benefits for the individual, for culture and for society, creativity should be given a more prominent role in education. However, although this may be seen as ‘a good thing’ (Craft, 2005) as it develops the individual artistic taste and creative capacities for the twenty-first century, it is also argued that this interest in creativity is driven mostly by commercial interests, which puts an economic value on creativity and art (Miller, 2004; Oakley, 2004). I will argue that reduction of the value of creativity to purely economic advantages is unwise, because it risks ignoring the important aspects and issues of creativity that cannot be dealt with or perceived valuable by the modern market (Craft, 2005, 2008; Craft, Gardner & Claxton, 2008a; Miller, 2004; Oakley, 2004). I will argue alongside these scholars of creativity that other aspects are of vital importance if society is constructively to deal with pressing issues that challenge it, such as community building through the promotion of democratic values in order to *reduce* economic inequalities and reduce the effects of a culture that is competition-based. Most people tend to see this aspect of creativity in a rather simple fashion as something positive, but in a modern, globalized society, this ‘angelic’ view (Ng, 2001b) can present a misleading picture of the phenomenon. Indeed, I will argue that creativity ‘should not be perceived in a naïve manner’ (Ng, 2001b) especially when it comes to its dubious relationship with the creative industries. If we take S. Sontag’s notion that the best defense against artistic trivialization and vulgarity is awareness of the reality of evil, we should apply a similar approach on creativity as well (Sontag & PAJ, 1977). However, when it comes to defining of ‘creativity’, there is no simple definition that encompasses all the various dimensions of this phenomenon. Indeed, in the field of psychology, where individual creativity has been most widely studied, there is still no agreement as to whether creativity is a human attribute; a process by which original ideas are generated; or a social construct. In the 1970s, the Torrance test of Creative Thinking was widely used by psychologists to identify individuals, particularly children, who were ‘creative’ (Burnard, 2007). Other researchers like Ken Robinson are of the opinion that creativity is a process of having original thoughts that have value (Phorecast & Robinson, 2008; Robinson, 2001, 2006).

Others like Csikszentmihalyi or Sullivan think of creativity more as a social construct (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1999).

### **Creativity as an Attribute of Individuals**

Plato and (possibly) Socrates, who held the Muses responsible for inspiring creativity, created an archetypal image of the divinely inspired poet which has remained

dominant in western civilization for centuries (Plato, 1996). In their perspective, creativity was reserved for a limited number of individuals with exceptional gifts, and there was little purpose for a mere mortal not possessing them to attempt to obtain this divine gift through simple education. This elitist, heroic concept of creativity focused attention on creative historic achievements, ones that pushed back the boundaries of human knowledge and understanding. In this tradition the social scientist Galton undertook the first systematic empirical study of 'genius' in 1689 (Burnard, 2007: 1176). Freud saw creativity as an expression of the unconscious. In the Freudian paradigm creative behavior is seen as a more socially acceptable form of sublimated undesirable unconscious conflicts or even neurosis (Freud, 1910/1964).

Other researchers such as Wallace & Gruber, who promote biographical case methods, see creativity as more of a unique individual disposition that is multi-causal and interactive, evolving in relation to a range of opportunities and influences (Wallace & Gruber, 1989). From the 1950s to mid 1970s a psychometric approach in creativity research was popular (Guilford, 1950; Torrance, 1974). Gardner analyzed the lives of distinguished creative individuals such as Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi in order to illustrate his important idea that intelligence is multiple (Gardner, 1983, 2004).

### **Creativity as a Process**

Although it was published in 1999, and its subject matter widely debated since, the NACCCE report "All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education" can still contribute an important perspective when one considers the recent UNCTAD report and their definition of creativity. To quote NACCCE's definition of creativity: 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (NACCCE, 1999).

According to the NACCCE, there are many aspects to consider in the definition of creativity. One of them is 'sectoral'. Here, although creativity is not unique to a single area, and tends to be equally fundamental to advances in the sciences, mathematics, technology, business, indeed, all areas of life, it can be considered to be most often associated with the arts (Howkins, 2001; Robinson, 2001). Thus it is in arts education that concepts and rhetorical positions with regard to understanding of creativity are most heightened.

Unlike the theory in which creativity is located among the élite, NACCCE's more 'democratic' concept of creativity proposes that all people (not only those with obvious exceptional ability), when provided with conducive conditions as well as relevant knowledge and skills, are capable of creative achievement *in some area of activity*. This 'democratic' concept of creativity appears to be preferred by the NACCCE, elaborated in Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gard-

ner, 1983), which recognized the capacity for creative achievements of the many rather than the few in all fields of human activity. In keeping with this idea: a democratic society should, they believe, ‘provide opportunities for everyone to succeed according to their own strengths and abilities’ (NACCCE, 1999: 29). According to this organization, the creative process consists of four features: 1) use of the imagination, 2) pursuit of a purpose, 3) originality, and 4) assignation of value.

An almost identical definition of creativity was proposed a few years later by Ken Robinson (who was also the chairman of the NACCCE) in his inspiring lecture ‘Do Schools Kill Creativity?’ (Robinson, 2006). In considering Robinson’s view, that creativity is the process of having original thoughts that have value, the following questions still remain unanswered: How do we define the value of creativity? Can we equate the creativity in the selection of torture methods with the creativity that manifests itself in a work of art? These two examples could not be more disparate and merely serve to illustrate the point that creativity as a process depends on the definition of values, so it can be seen in a positive as well as a negative light. As McLaren has pointed out, much of human creative effort has been at the service of violent and devious stratagems. We prize ancient cave paintings as creative; do we prize equally the wall decorations of ancient Assyrians made from skins of fallen enemies? Or the Nazi-made lampshades fashioned from the skins of holocaust victims? If we are to be honest in our quest for understanding creativity, we cannot evade acknowledging that, like all human endeavors, it too has its dark and demonic side (McLaren, 1993).

In contrast, Cropley argues that creativity has three major characteristics: novelty, effectiveness and ethicality. Not only does the idea have to depart from the familiar, but it also has to achieve some end which might be artistic, spiritual or even making a profit, and finally it has to avoid crimes, selfish or destructive behavior, war-mongering and suchlike, or in other words it has to be *ethical engaged* (Cropley, 2001). According to this definition it could be argued that even attempting to assign value to the creativity of torture is wrong, because torture is considered non-ethical and destructive (even if conducted ‘of the people, by the people and for the people’) and cannot be considered a creative process in the first place. Although it is tempting to dismiss this point of view, it would be biased to say that creativity does not reside even in cruelty. For example, in 1970s Cambodia, it is said that Pol Pot executed prominent intellectuals because they were seen as a threat to the regime. According to his view, the wearing of glasses was an important indicator of reading and therefore of intellectual activity. Since intellectuals consequently stopped wearing glasses, he managed to find another way to identify them. The finger-tips of children were noted to be sensitive enough to distinguish the alteration in skin texture caused by wearing glasses, so they were employed to touch a suspect’s nose and thus determine their fate (Zizek & Stankovic, 2007). Is this not creative, albeit in the darkest sense?

### **Creativity as a Social Construct**

Another view of creativity is of a totally social construct, embedded in time and place. Whereas Einstein stated that it takes true originality not to solve a problem but rather to formulate it (Einstein & Infeld, 1938), in 1977 Nelson Goodman re-framed the question ‘*What is Art?*’ as ‘*When is Art?*’. Unlike many formalists who believed that a work of art and its associated creativeness were defined by its physical form, Goodman believed that for something to exist as a work of art depended on its environmental context. He claimed that: ‘The problem apparently lies in our failure to realize that something may *function* as a work of art at one time and not at others, hence the shift from “what” to “when”’ (Goodman, 1977).

Inspired by Goodman, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi posed a similar question ‘When is creativity?’ (Sullivan, 2007). He believed that creativity cannot merely be observed from an individual’s cognitive perspective, but must be understood in relation to other salient aspects of the environment in which the said individual operates, firstly a cultural or symbolic aspect which he calls the ‘domain’, and secondly a social aspect called the ‘field’. Csikszentmihalyi’s view is that the domain is a necessary component of creativity because that which is new is only meaningful in reference to the old, and it is impossible to introduce a variation without reference to an existing pattern. In this paradigm creativity occurs when a person makes a change in the domain; a change that will be transmitted through time. Gatekeepers such as teachers, critics, journal editors, museum curators, agency directors, etc. (the social organization of the domain) define what belongs to it. These gatekeepers are referred to as the ‘field’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

### **Creativity: East and West**

Another debate within the definition of creativity as located in time and space with regard to the profound cultural differences in various parts of the world is raised by Ng’s work.

She notices that the liberal western societies (e.g., America, Britain, Australia) place a greater emphasis on the individual vis-à-vis the social groups, unlike Confucian-heritage societies (e.g., China, Japan, Korea) whose members are encouraged to ‘sacrifice the small me so as to complete the big me’ (Ng, 2001b). Markus and Kitayama (1991) highlight cultural differences in socialization between individualistic and collectivistic societies by the way in which, in a collectivistic society, the need for validation is orientated towards conformity with the social group, whereas in an individualistic society, the orientation and social pressure is put toward differentiation and difference. Lim notes that western societies are celebrating uniqueness whereas eastern societies tend towards conformity, encouraging social cohesion (Lim, 2004). Comparing and contrasting eastern and western societies

and cultures, Ng (2001a) noticed that the characteristics of the eastern and western cultures are:

East	West
Tightly organized, strong social rules and norms	Loosely organized, few social rules and norms
Emphasis on social group	Emphasis on individual
Hierarchical, distinctive ranks/rules	Egalitarian, little distinction between superiors and subordinates
Emphasis on social order and harmony in family/society	Emphasis on open exchange of ideas between individuals
High value on gaining social approval of group	High value on realizing creative potential

Hence the eastern approach to creativity seems to be much more holistic than the western one. For Nisbett, these two different approaches reflect the social and economic organizations of ancient Greece and China (Nisbett, 2003). It would be interesting to see how cultures excluded by this eastern/western paradigm of creativity, such as African ones, see creativity and art. According to Bamford, the Namibian term *Ngoma* sees the arts as being a united whole. While this same term can mean any one of the art forms (e.g., dance, music, visual arts and drama) it also stands for the communication between the arts and the spirit. *Ngoma* can also mean ‘drum’, but under this notion it implies the rhythm or beat of a drum that charges life with energy. It implies a transformation, where the coming part of the community is linking the past with the future, heaven with earth, ancestors with children, and the mind with the spirit. The term *Ngoma* also implies that the action of the arts has a purpose or a function larger than the art form itself. It prepares the individual and community for the task, be those tasks the mundane or the profound, the educative and the spiritually enlightening. *Ngoma* also sees the arts as integral to society (Bamford, 2006).

It might be true to say that African culture, at least when it comes to Namibia, shares the eastern perspective on creativity. Lately, in a global era, eastern societies are witnesses of an enormous pressure for acculturation to occur as cultural individualism rather than cultural collectivism (Ng, 2001; Craft, 2008).

### **The Progressive Vision of Creativity**

Within all these constructs of creativity lies an ideological rift of supreme importance to policy-makers. A leading arts educationalist Graeme Sullivan argues that creativity helps the individuals’ capacity to see and understand things in new ways

that others also find important. Like Csikszentmihaly, he sees it as characterized by individual agency and social action; and that creativity has an important role to play in advancing our critical understanding of complex artistic, educational and technological issues of the times (Sullivan, 2007). In 2004 Anne Bamford conducted the first international analysis of arts education research for *UNESCO* in partnership with the *Australia Council for the Arts* and the *International Federations of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)* in 75 countries, aiming to explore the impact of creativity and the arts within global education. According to her, art has an intrinsic value (Bamford, 2006: 107) which does not preclude additional educational benefits such as: positive effects on educational attainment, improvement of the skills and competencies within the arts; enhanced literacy and language learning; improvement of perceptions of schools; social, economic and educational improvements within communities; benefit to health and well-being of young people.

Furthermore, Professor Bamford indicates that:

- creativity and imagination can be nurtured through arts-based processes;
- poor quality arts education or no arts education may inhibit the development of creativity and imagination;
- arts education can instigate more creative and interesting approaches to teaching (Bamford, 2006: 128).

In spite of the rhetoric of policy-makers, who seem to advocate all forms of creativity, they only really regard it as valuable if it can lead to economic gain.

Progressive scholars argue that, without a moral and ethical framework, uncritical encouragement of creativity in education raises fundamental questions about whether it serves children, their communities, or the wider cultural and social groupings to which they belong (Craft, Gardner & Claxton, 2008). Sternberg, who argued that creativity should be observed in relation to wisdom, also pointed out the necessity of this wider framework for observing and encouraging creativity: wisdom is not just about maximizing one's own or someone else's self-interest, but about balancing various self-interests (intrapersonal) with the interests of others (interpersonal) and of other aspects of the context in which one lives (extrapersonal) such as one's city or country or environment or even God. Wisdom also involves creativity, in that the wise solution to a problem may be far from obvious (Sternberg, 2003). Furthermore, he hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that 'although wise thinking must be, to some extent, creative, creative thinking... need not be wise' (Sternberg, 2003: 158). Perhaps examples that best illustrate Sternberg's point come from the core of the creative industry – advertising.

**Example No. 1 – ‘Although Wise Thinking Must Be, to Some Extent, Creative...’**

Amnesty International in Switzerland launched an award-winning human rights awareness campaign, “Not Here But Now”, using outdoor posters on walls in Swiss cities in June 2006. The aim of the campaign was to remind people that human rights violations were occurring within a few hours flight from Swiss cities. In these posters Swiss cities are linked with troubled zones: Gaza and Zürich, Somalia and Geneva, Israel and Basel, Iraq and Basel, China and Geneva, Liberia and Winterthur (see Figures 1 and 2). Creative minds from Walker Werbeagentur Zürich, such as executive creative director/copywriter Pius Walker, art director Marianne Friedli, photographer Federico Naef, illustrators Florian Fröhlich and Carolina Gurtner, account supervisor Hans Beer, with Amnesty’s advertising supervisor Daniel Meienberger, should be credited for this particularly successful humanitarian campaign, while bearing in mind the fact that in different circumstances the very same minds could be employed by those responsible for the situation depicted on these posters.



Figure 1: Non accade qui, ma adesso



Figure 2: Es geschieht nicht hier aber jetzt

Figure 1: Ita. ‘Not Here But Now’ – Here, through a cunning transposition, an image is placed over a real scene to emphasize hunger and need in other places of the world.

Figure 2: Ger. ‘Not Here But Now!’ The same idea referring to armed childhood.



**Example No. 2 – ‘... Creative Thinking... Need not Be Wise’**

On November 14<sup>th</sup> 2008, the major Croatian daily newspaper *Jutarnji list* contained two pages of advertisement for the first Croatian issue of the *Forbes* Magazine. The first page states: ‘Ne budi nula od čovjeka.’, i.e. ‘Don’t be (worth) a zero’ (see Figure 3), whereas the second page immediately discloses the related phrase: ‘Budi sedam nula.’, i.e. ‘Be (worth) seven zeros’ (see Figure 4). The message of this class-based ‘hate speech’, according to Croatian journalist and columnist Viktor Ivancic, is that entrepreneurial and social ‘failure’ – or even the simple lack of interest in ‘success’ – is crucial evidence of the collapse of humanitarian ideals. According to this advertisement, what is inhumane is not exploitation, but rather abstinence from it! (Ivancic, 2008). The most creative and innovative aspect of this advertisement is the use of numerical symbols, as a way of advocating human inequality and greed. This does not imply that advertising is necessarily balanced evenly between positive and negative attributes.



Figure 3: Don’t be (worth) a zero.



Figure 4: Be (worth) seven zeros.

### The Economic Vision of Creativity

The Creative Industries, or ‘new’ economy (Miller, 2004), is now seen as a major promoter of creativity. Eisner believes that the arts can and should be studied through a process of critical analysis designed to help understand how people are influenced through mass media. In his view, an art form seen as a visual text needs to be both read and interpreted, for the message it sends is often “below the surface” or “between the lines”. ‘Learning how to read the messages of a visual text is thus a way of protecting personal rights. It is also a way of determining whose interests are being served by the images that surround us’ (Eisner, 2002). If we take into account Eisner’s notion, we should explore in more detail whose interests are hidden behind the ‘angelic’ nature of creativity. Wherever interests exist, politics does too.

According to UNCTAD, the term ‘creative industries’ is of relatively recent origin; it was first used in the report *Creative Nations* in Australia in 1994 (UNCTAD & UNDP, 2008: 11). The UNCTAD defines the creative industries as:

- the cycles of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs;
- those which constitute a set of knowledge-based activities, focused on but not limited to the arts; potentially generating revenues from trade and intellectual property rights;
- those comprising tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives;
- situated at the cross-road among the artisan, services and industrial sectors;
- constituting a new dynamic sector in world trade (UNCTAD & UNDP, 2008).

According to NACCCE, the phenomenon called ‘creative industries’ includes: advertising, architecture, arts and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio. Along with the patents from science and technology like in pharmaceuticals, electronics, biotechnology, and information systems, these are collectively known as ‘The Intellectual Property Sector’. Clearly creativity plays a major role in advancing all these fields of economic activity.

Within this economic paradigm, where money changes hands around creative activity, the question soon arises about who owns the created product. In John Howkins’s view, the creative economy is an economy where a person’s ideas, not land or capital, are the most important input and output (Howkins, 2005). For Howkins, creativity in the economy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was regulated by the Intellectual Property laws (IP). It was a special preserve of

a small number of people – professional artists and inventors, and an even smaller number of its investors and distributors – notably global entertainment and pharmaceutical companies. For him, in the field of creative industry, governments' claims to a balance between protecting right-holders' interests and public ones are dubious. He argues that the majority of the people in the new economy are not just passive consumers of creativity but active users – or want to be. All people have an instinct and a right to create and express their own thoughts. Therefore public demand for knowledge calls for a new Intellectual Property paradigm (Howkins, 2005). If we add to these demands NACCCE's proclaimed ideals from the beginning of this essay: 'a democratic society should provide opportunities for everyone to succeed according to their own strengths and abilities' (NACCCE, 1999). This position resembles Marx's: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need!' (Marx, 1875/1988). Hence the socialist rhetoric usually associated with Marx and his followers has now become commonplace among advocates of the 'new' economy as well. Again we see a rhetorical confusion around what are really very different – opposing – ideological positions.

The creative economy proponents could be considered advocates of the '*trickle-down effect*' underpinned with the philosophical concept of the market – a free market that is liberated of authority's intervention. This concept, first introduced in the writings of Milton Friedman (1982) and Friedrich von Hayek (1944/2001), best describes the mantra of modern economy: Liberalism is opposed, however, to supplanting competition by inferior methods of guiding economic activity. And it regards competition as superior not only because in most circumstances it is the most efficient method known but because it is the only method which does not require the coercive or arbitrary intervention of authority (Hayek, 1944/2001: 37).

The actual term '*trickle-down effect*' was coined by Ronald Reagan in a speech in January 1981 to describe a theory of distribution which holds that the concentration of wealth in a few hands benefits the poor as the wealth necessarily "trickles down" to them; mainly through employment generated by the demand for personal services and as a result of investments made by the wealthy. The former President of General Motors and Defense Secretary of the United States of America, Charles E. Wilson, is noteworthy for his remark: 'What is good for General Motors is good for the country'.

This simple statement would become a symbol of market-led 'American' capitalism (Stiglitz, 2002). If paraphrased in relation to creativity and the creative industry, the remark might sound like this: 'What is good for the creative industry is good for creativity'; or even: 'What is good for General Motors is good for creativity'. Whether or not this is the case remains to be seen.

### Progressive Versus Economic Visions: The Politics of Creativity

Those progressives who disagree with the epithets of the ‘trickle-down effect’ argue that creativity in its own right has the capability to promote a sense of community and non-competitive culture and, as Gardner puts it, ‘generosity and life-enhancement’ (Gardner, 2004). They see the economic exploitation of creativity as an abuse; a way of merely maintaining the current state of economic affairs, which would merely serve to widen the already existing gap between the rich minority and the impoverished majority (Globalissues, 2008; Stiglitz, 2002; UNCTAD & UNDP, 2008). Supporters of this idea point to the fact that, according to UNESCO, more than 121 million children in the world are out of education. Every second child out of 2.2 billion is impoverished. Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn’t happen (Globalissues, 2008; UNICEF, 2005). Nevertheless, economic visionaries argue, it is true to say that more people than ever, in the entire human history, managed to break the chains of poverty. Indeed, but it is also a poor argument if we look at this fact within the context. We should take in notion that due to birth-rate (natural increase) there has never been more inhabitants of this planet, and there has never been more goods and services produced in the entire human history, and thus less need for poverty.

While reading this essay, one might ask oneself: How is the widening gap between the rich minority and the impoverished majority related to creativity and education in the first place? Perhaps the best answer to that question can be offered by Avijit Halder, one of the major figures of the movie *Born into Brothels*, commenting on his mother’s wishful thinking regarding his education in London: ‘We don’t have enough money to live, let alone to study’ (Briski & Kauffman, 2004). *Born into Brothels*, by Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski, is a portrait of several creative children who live in the red light district of Calcutta, where their mothers work as prostitutes. Not only does Zana Briski, a New York-based photographer, give each of the children a camera and teach them to look at the world with new eyes, but she also, in a way, employs its as well as the children’s creative potential to teach us to look at the world and those children within it with new eyes; to bring our attention to children who are not merely a side effect of brothels activities, but a side effect of the market-driven economy that generates inequalities as well.

When it comes to the relationship between inequalities and economics, the field is seen as something objective and inevitable rather than influenced by the interests of powerful and privileged subjects within it. According to this vision, inequalities are seen either as consequences of individual attributes and choices, or as inevitable in the process of attaining equilibrium in ‘the long run’ in the existing economic circumstances. However, Balibar and Zizek call this vision of econom-

ic determinism a form of 'ultra-objective' or 'systemic' violence (Balibar, 1997; Žizek, 2008).

According to these two authors, 'ultra-objective' or 'systemic' violence is invisible violence inherent to the 'normal' state of things. It is counterpart to all-too-visible 'subjective' violence and it sustains the very zero-level standard against which something is perceived as subjective. Although 'invisible', it should be taken into account if one wants to understand complexities of the social world. Global capitalism thus creates 'replaceable' individuals such as the homeless, the unemployed, or perhaps even children from the brothels of Calcutta. Regarding the movie, at the end of the day, the paradox of it all is that it is still a film, which was readily received by a commercial albeit creativity-driven industry which is still generating new Avijits. Here we tend to behave towards the material of the film according to the 'one does not see what one does' philosophy (Stiglitz, 2002). As Pierre Bourdieu pointed out, the conservation of the social order is decisively reinforced by what Durkheim called 'logical conformity', i.e., the orchestration of categories of perception of the social world, which being adjusted to the divisions of the established order (and thereby to the interests of those who dominate it) and common to all minds structured in accordance with those structures, present every appearance of objective necessity (Bourdieu, 1979/2008).

Here we begin to see the embeddedness of economic determinism within the rhetoric of calls for more creativity in schools. Phorecast is a Swedish consulting firm that scouts and combines innovators and experts into multi-disciplinary teams focused on finding new markets, directions and ideas for your organization. They believe in the power of innovation and that sharing creative ideas is the key to good business (Phorecast, 2008). In a key speech, when interviewed on their Podcast, Ken Robinson, famous arts educator, deployed the following rhetorical strategy. In answer to the question: *What type of things should we be teaching in our educational system as well?* Robinson replied:

Well, you see... half of my arguments here is that... it is partly economic, it is partly cultural and it is also partly, frankly, humanitarian. You know... it is part of this to say that we are living now in times of immense economic change... the circumstances that we are now facing are totally different from the ones in which our education systems revolve. We are living in globalized economies which depend more and more on intellectual capital or knowledgeable workers and so on... more and more on the capacity for innovation on entrepreneurialism... the need to create new forms of work to respond to the new forms of work which are already emerging. So there is a very powerful *economic* argument to promote innovation and creativity systematically... (Phorecast & Robinson, 2008; my italics)

Here in Robinson's answer, not only do we witness the absence of a reasonable critique of the neoliberal concept of economic exploitation responsible for creating impoverished workers, a billion of creative Avijits all over the world, that we are never going to meet, but also there is a slippage to an economic paradigm that takes necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few (King, 1963). Here he deploys the 'progressive' rhetoric used previously by many critical scholars who have a very different ideological position. Robinson continues to confuse and therefore to disguise his essentially neoconservative position:

I know... from first hand... thousands, and you know, through the research you do, millions of people who pass through education alienated by the whole process, disaffected by... they feel: 'this is not for me... this is...' and they go into adult life not knowing who they are or what they could really do. So I think we should have education systems which celebrate very many different ways of thinking and in practical terms that means, ones in which the arts, the sciences, technology, humanities, physical education are given equal weight. We should be educating people lifelong, not just kids. We should be having intergenerational learning. We should be making much closer connections between our economic, cultural and community allies and we should be making much better use than we used to do of the internet technologies... because... that increasing is how people are learning and we should embrace it, not reject it... and to me it is also a humanitarian argument – it is about the quality of life and quality of purpose. (Phorecast & Robinson, 2008)

Here again, the reasons that Robinson introduces for his advocating of creativity are as follows: firstly, economic reasons; secondly, cultural reasons; and finally, albeit hesitantly, humanitarian reasons (Phorecast & Robinson, 2008). Slavoj Žižek famously quotes the Freudian joke about a kettle to illustrate the inconsistency of such a defensive argument: 'Firstly, I never borrowed a kettle from you; secondly, I returned it to you unbroken; and thirdly, the kettle was already broken when I got it from you' (Žižek, 2008: 93). This manner of ordering arguments, as in Robinson's case, subtly confirms a fact that is being denied. A genuinely altruistic approach to the current situation would demand that *nothing* should precede the humanitarian cause. It is not extreme to say that under the current economic state of affairs, the economic and humanitarian reasons are mutually exclusive. Despite the proclaimed '*trickle-down effect*', the gap between the rich and the poor has never been wider. One must conclude that the existing economic system is actually generating inequalities instead of resolving them. Proponents of an enhanced role for creativity in education would argue that the system is as flawed as it is precisely because creativity was not given a greater role in education. This may be true. However, in light of the shift to the new economic paradigm, the use of creativity in global industries and consumer-driven societies and its subsequent valuation in economic terms rather than humanitarian, will merely maintain current inequalities, if not propagate further ones.

What can be seen as a fundamental flaw in the logic of Howkins, Florida, Robinson and others like them is that in the effort to put forward their reasons for the promotion of creativity in the educational system, to use Einstein's logic from the beginning of this discussion, they have omitted to locate the original problem within the concept of the existing 'creative' exploitation of creativity.

### **Conclusion**

Slowly, progressive scholars are becoming aware of the dangers of locating 'creativity' within a paradigm of economic (market) determinism. Of course, creativity may also be construed as playing a vital role in surviving and thriving in a very uncertain immediate and wider context. But much of the debate about how creativity may contribute within education to the preparation of generative citizens is underpinned, internationally, by a particular model of engagement – western individualism, fed by the market economy – which colors ambient values to a strong degree. Accordingly, creativity as played out in education and in work is vulnerable to a variety of forms of 'blindness,' including a disregard for diversity in culture and values, a lack of engagement with the question of how we might foster wisdom, increasing barriers to doing good work through decreasing trust, and a hesitation to assume responsibility for improving society (Craft, Gardner & Claxton, 2008: 5).

If we consider the fact that a shift has taken us from the older industrial model to a new economic paradigm, where knowledge, innovation and creativity are key, and that the 'intellectual property' sectors in the United States, whose value depends on their ability to generate new ideas rather than to manufacture commodities, are now the most powerful element in the US economy (NACCCE, 1999), I argue that the value of creativity is shifting from a traditional humanistic and cultural model to serve the new economic doctrine. This is exemplified in today's creative industries. Although it may appear that 'creativity' is wanted and desired more than ever, it is not so if we take into account the nature of the profit-driven logic to which this form of creativity is being reshaped. We can see that all the definitions of creativity outlined at the beginning of this essay are vulnerable to this form of insidious reconceptualization.

To put it in economic terms, if creativity today is reduced to a currency of the creative industry, then what we are faced with is – an inflation of creativity! And inflation is, just to remind you, a decline in the real value of currency. Inflation of creativity occurs when we perceive the creativity in a naïve manner. Hence this essay owes its existence to 'Robinson's' appealing, eloquent but, I now understand, dangerous rhetoric in defense of creativity in education, presented in the lecture 'Do schools kill creativity?'.

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Pero Mrnarević

KREATIVNOST – POROK ILI VRLINA?:  
STUDIJA O RAZLIČITIM VIĐENJIMA KREATIVNOSTI

*Sažetak*

Ovaj ogled bavi se 'kreativnošću' i načinom na koji se ona percipira u modernom zapadnom društvu. Većina je, prilično jednostavno, sklona promatrati kreativnost kao nešto pozitivno te s obzirom na njezine dobrobiti za pojedinca, kulturu i društvo postoji općenita suglasnost da bi kreativnosti valjalo dati istaknutiju ulogu. No u modernom, globaliziranom društvu takvo 'anđeosko'

gledište može prezentirati varljivu sliku rečene pojave. Kakva je dakle njezina uloga i kako bi se ona trebala rekonceptualizirati? Autor obrađuje dva različita ideološka viđenja kreativnosti – progresivno, humano i demokratsko gledište nasuprot ekonomskom koje se ravna prema tržištu. Iako bi se to moglo činiti paradoksalnim, dva suprotna viđenja uvelike dijele istu retoriku, te autor nastoji ukloniti neke zbunjujuće slojeve što prikrivaju spomenuta stajališta. Mrnarević pokazuje da je na djelu pomak vrijednosti kreativnosti s tradicionalnog humanističkog i kulturnog modela radi služenja novoj ekonomskoj doktrini. Drži se da je taj pomak nerazborit jer zanemaruje druge aspekte kreativnosti, koji su iznimno važni za sposobnost društva da konstruktivno rješava goruća pitanja što ga stavljaju pred izazove, primjerice smanjenje ekonomskih nejednakosti i drugih učinaka kulture utemeljene na natjecanju.

*Ključne riječi:* politika kreativnosti, progresivno nasuprot ekonomskom viđenju kreativnosti, ekonomske nejednakosti

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