

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Creativity: Goal or Path? On Meaning of Creativity

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### Abstract

There is a dilemma to be answered: either has creativity an intrinsic value of its own or it represents but a mean to reach specific end. The axiology of creativity can contribute to solve the problem. The value as such has normative basis based on social imperative "ought to". Twofold axiology (intern and social) stands sometimes in conflict because of presuppositions and false beliefs related to historic state of society. Proposed study makes approach to creativity based on psychology and sociology. The latter relates creativity to social capital. Therefore, concept of creative society of Richard Florida is problematic, since it lacks creative basis for development of social capital in new type of knowledge society.

**Keywords:** *Creativity, Destruction of social capital, Meaning of creativity.*

### Introduction

One of the current concepts, formulated with the aim to understand the complexity of the contemporary world and to contribute to social and economic development is creativity. It is a multidimensional concept, refers to a broad spectrum of sciences, psychology, starting and ending economic geography.

What is creativity? Who is creative? Is it possible to improve creativity? If yes, then how? Through education or in a different way? It is very demanding to answer these questions, which date back to the beginnings of human thinking and scientists have been attempting to do it since the second half of the last century, when the research of creativity began with works like *Creativity* by Joy P. Guilford and *Guiding creative talent*, respectively *Torrance tests of creative thinking* by the "father of modern creativity" Ellis P. Torrance [1]. Since the publication of the work *The Rise of Creative Class* by Richard Florida [2], the understanding of creativity has been polarized.

On the one hand, mainly in psychology has widely developed a research of creativity in a form of theories and models; the applicative approach to creativity led to the concepts of creative capital, creative industries and creative cities [3]. On the other hand, creativity became a "right" and in public spheres a buzzword or shibboleth. It is, for example, confirmed by entering the word "kreativita" (both Czech and Slovak word for "creativity") into a browser. The first shown result

is a webpage of an online trader offering merchandise including webcam or hair straightened Bellissima Creativity (an absurd marketing blend of Italian and English word). In March 2014, there was over 55, 8 mil. results for the keyword "creativity"<sup>1</sup> in Google, and there were 108 TED Talks dedicated to creativity. "Creativity" was the most common word in communication between users of LinkedIn and during the period when the unemployment rate in the USA reached 10%, the unemployment rate of the creative class was only half [4]. Chadt et al [5] came up with an idea of creativity quotient CQ, consisting of a sum of IQ, EQ (emotional quotient) and AQ (activity quotient expressing the ability to accept challenges and realization of desired objectives).

The need for creativity is right, logic and certainly clear. The key question to be asked is: Is creativity the goal or the path to achieve this goal? If yes-what is the goal? What will happen, if we are successful in education of youth and it is more creative? Would it create a creative society or a society more creative than now? What would happen with the information society and the knowledge society, which is being developed by other scientific approaches? Would they cease to exist or on the contrary, the individual would be "informative, knowing and at the same time

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<sup>1</sup> "Globalization" had 7,2 mil. results, „quality of life“ 1010 mil. results, "global warming" 239 mil. results

creative”? The aim of the contribution is to outline creativity in a context of its relationships and sense. And thus answer the question, whether creativity is a goal (of social and economic development) or a path to its achieving.

### **Creativity: What are we Talking About When We Talk About It?**

Creativity is slippery concept [6]. It is one of the foundations of modern civilization [7]. It concerns the widest range of scientists from psychologists, theologians and artists through sociologists and economists to geographers investigating its spatial differentiation, who attempt to summarize its essence in tens or maybe hundreds of definitions. According to Plucker & Makel [8], creativity is “the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a percentile product that is novel and useful as defined within a social context.” Fritsch & Stuetzer [9] state: “creativity is often defined as the ability to recombine existing knowledge in new ways, thereby generating new ideas or product.” However, there is no generally valid definition of creativity, not even within a psychological approach [10]. Research is concentrated on a process of creativity from neurobiological processes within brain to its outputs in a form of creative products or services.

A subject of scientists’ interest is its connections with intelligence, knowledge and wisdom. In creativity we may distinguish its biological, psychological and social factors and their integration [11]. Robinson said at one of the TED conferences dedicated to creativity in California in 2006, that creativity is as important as literacy and it has to be understood like this.

Creative man is called *homo creator*, society generating optimal conditions for development of creativity is considered to be creativogenic (creativogenic society). A society considered to reach the highest level of creativity in history is Renaissance Florence.

According to the book Genesis, God created Earth, what is in Judeo-Christian society considered to be the very first act of creativity [1]. Neolithic man domesticated animals, invented wheel and learned to keep fire. He drew cave paintings of animals in Spanish Altamira and cave paintings of landscape in Turkish Çatal Hüyük. The ancient Sumerians wrote the first “book” whose title is known-Epic of Gilgamesh and formulated the oldest codes. In Egypt, they wrote The Book of the Dead and built pyramids, the Vedas and national epics Mahabharata and Ramayama were composed in India. Chinese were the first to know

letterpress printing, compass, the manufacture of porcelain, silk or gunpowder. The period from the half of 8<sup>th</sup> to the half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century is the Golden Age of Islam.

We have to ask a question: why the successful development in these parts of the world did not continue? And why, on the contrary, the then underdeveloped Europe, which knew for the works of ancient classics only from Arabic translations, began to develop? In 1088 was founded the university in Bologna and in the next century in Paris, Oxford and Modena. Why there and not in Baghdad, the wealthy center of the then Islamic world at a much higher level of development? In his work first published in 1952, Christopher Dawson divides the development of the western society and culture into seven stages: (1.) Hellenism, (2.) Roman world, (3.) forming of western eastern Christianity, (4.) medieval Christianity 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> cent., (5.) period of religious splitting and humanistic culture 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cent., (6.) secularization at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> and during the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century, (7.) disintegration of Europe as a cause and effect of the WWI and WWII [12]. Why this development and not some other led to the formation of worldwide civilization, at first the richest civilization in human history and then the first civilization hating itself? Similarly to a mentally ill person harming his body, the Western civilization is a subject to self-destruction and its culture and anthropological sciences-anthropology and sociology celebrate this self-destruction and consider it to be a “progress”. What has caused the development to change into a disruption of civilization? Dawson [12] believes, that it was secularism, which “set man free” and because he had to believe in something, unbounded confidence in progress and science. This new “faith” and freedom led him into two regimes, where “free man” became worse than animal - Nazi with its Holocaust and Communist with its Gulags. The Communist lasted longer and had more victims, but it still did not prevent the Nobel committee from awarding its admirers, for example the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre the Prize.

### **Psychological and Social Approach to Creativity-Axiology of Creativity**

We can speak about creativity dichotomously. One of divisions is creativity on the one hand as a psychological phenomenon, and on the other hand as an economic phenomenon, while the latter is based on Florida [13]. Kozbelt et al [14] distinguishes „ten major categories of creativity: Developmental, Psychometric, Economic, Stage

and Componential Process, Cognitive, Problem Solving and Expertise-Based, Problem Finding, Evolutionary, Typological, and Systems. Economic context of creativity based on Florida [2] is not an accurate name, as this author, working at the University of Toronto is just one of the authors dealing with the economic context of creativity. Other writing about this topic, even earlier than Florida, are according to Kozbelt et al. [14] Rubenson, Runco [15] and Sternberg, Lubart [16]. A more apt name of this context is political, because it is based on the ideology of the New Left. The approach to creativity can thus be divided into psychological and social, while social is a collective name for economic, political and other approaches. There is no consensus about whether creativity is reflected in creative thinking or creative product.

The most significant scientists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dealing with creativity are considered to be the psychologists Joy Paul Guilford<sup>2</sup> a Teresa Amabile. Guilford is known for his CPS model (Model of Creative Problem Solving). According to Amabile, creativity consists of three key components: (i) *abilities concerning the field* (Raphael or Chagall are genius painters, not mathematicians), (ii) *abilities in a relationship to creativity* (scale tones are known by many, but only some, e.g. Tchaikovsky or Verdi are able to compose operas), (iii) *motivation to solve problems* – inside, which is more important, and outside. Creative people have a strong need of self-realization and recognition, which are at the top of in the Abraham Maslow Pyramid of Needs [7].

In the *psychological* approach, creativity is studied at the level of individuals, in the *social* approach in a relationship to society creating the environment for creativity. Very simply speaking, the former is focused on creative individual and the latter on creative product and/or creative environment. These approaches are integrated by Csikszentmihalyi [18] into Systems Model, in which he connects personal qualities of an individual, especially motivation and pleasure with characteristics of the creative society and the creative culture. From the psychological point of view, creativity is traditionally distinguished on the four P's: *Person, Product, Process, Press*, currently, there are two more added: *Persuasion and Potential* [14]. Creativity is often associated with divergent thinking leading to various ideas. Its opposite is convergent thinking, i.e. reasoning leading to one correct solution. Divergent thinking

is typical for creativity, convergent for intelligence. Kaufman and Beghetto are authors of the "4c" model of creativity. It consists of "mini-c" (creativity focused on learning), "little-c" (creativity focused on solving everyday problems), "Pro-C" (creativity of people living of creative activities) and "Big-C" (individuals with extraordinary creativity).

Social approach to creativity takes many forms. The relationship between creativity and society is extensive; one of the most important functions of society in a relation to creativity is cultivation or destruction of its axiological anchor. On one hand, society is a consumer of creative products (outcomes of creativity) and on the other hand, creates environment which stimulates or oppresses creativity. In public discourse there are several lingering myths and prejudices about creativity obstructing the creative attitude:

"This common myth is more based on an observation rather than on a solid statistical research. It is true that we can find many artists, especially dancers, musicians and actors in the homosexual community, however, there has not been shown any causal link between sexual orientation and creativity. According to the statistics measuring degree of creativity, creativity is manifested equally among both homosexuals and non-homosexuals. Based on their research, Dacey and Lennon [11] consider one of the main features of a creative personality getting rid of stereotypes of sexual roles. Creativity as a process of searching for a solution of a given task is not dependent on sexual orientation. It can be (and in many cases really is) taken into account as one of the elements affecting the creative process, but it is neither a cause nor a condition."

- Creative people are genius and they are born with special abilities
- Creativity is more common among people with homosexual orientation
- Creativity may be increased by alcohol and addictive substances
- Creativity is merely a step away from madness
- Creativity necessary requires a flash of inspiration (aha!, eureka!)
- Creativity may be induced by brainstorming or other similar techniques" [17].

Creativity is not a term with neutral content, if that were so, we would have to equally asses for example discovery of penicillin, aid for the poorest people through micro-loans for which the Bangladeshi economist Muhammad Yunus got the

<sup>2</sup> Day of Creativity, April 7, is held in honor of his speech after being elected the President of APA (American Psychological Association) on April 7, 1950.

Nobel Prize, and the New York Twins attack. The criterion of creativity assessment is its axiological anchor. The teleological perception of the world is, whether we like it or not, a part of our learning and deciding, because without the formulation of objectives it is difficult to find appropriate ways [...] Values are ‘what is supposed to be’ they are related to ‘society as what is supposed to be’ [19]. What holds society together and prevents its collapse into chaos is trust and social order. It is either “a set of stable, regular and predictable patterns of behavior or cooperative behavior” Elster [20]. The most important human capital is not the financial capital, as it may seem at first glance, but the social capital. Its essential part is trust, which “is desirable in itself” [20].

Florida [2,4] ideologically incorporated his concept of creative class to the “New Left”, so creativity has been included with feminism, gender, human rights, environmentalism, equality, etc. and became a “right.” Due to destruction of social capital associated with the boom of the creative class, it is necessary to reject his concepts. Regarding the importance of social capital, Rodríguez-Pose & von Berlepsch [15] state “positive and robust connection between social capital and individual happiness across European countries.” In this context, Murgas [21] states: “the concept of creative class has turned into ideology and its associated social engineering. Florida does not refer to psychologists and other scientists dealing with subjective well-being, happiness or quality of life, because in ideology, one does neither dispute nor validate, but proclaims dogmas. Understanding of creativity as the exclusive characteristic from which was derived Florida’s division into creative core and creative professionals has expired. Creativity has become a right. Creativity has become a right and at the same time utopia, dangerous, if enforced violently”. Florida’s approach led to a significant enhancement of dichotomy of creativity which reminds the status in another concept-quality of life. This is divided into hedonism, enjoying pleasure, and eudaimonia accenting dedication. The postmodern perception of quality of life is hedonism in the conditions of the 21st century. This dichotomy is also reflected in the question on how to increase creativity. Robinson [22] states that school kills creativity and this opinion is also supported by statements of people like Bill Gates in popular media. On the other hand, Törnqvist [6] proves the key role of schools and mainly specific teachers in the development of thinking and thus creativity on the example of Nobel Prize winners. It can be added that Florida does not take into account even the official statistical data,

published by UNCTAD in Creative Economy Report 2010 [23], refuting his outputs. The solution is of course not refusing creativity but Florida understands of it, and vice versa, to connect it with the growth of social capital, like Hui et al. [24] did.

### Present- Is it the Age of Creativity?

The term “creativity” is relatively new, it hadn’t been used before WW II [6]. Richard Florida wrote that the present is the age of creativity [2]. Is that so? Dante, Cervantes and Dostoyevsky were writing their novels, Shakespeare and Molière their plays; Newton discovered the gravity law, Copernicus heliocentric system. Michelangelo carved the David, Da Vinci painted the Last Supper, and Mozart composed music-and all of this without anyone studying creativity. There was a tremendous development of science and technology after the WW II. Man discovered atomic bomb, walked on the Moon, and invented computers, internet, read human DNA. Is it a proof of a correlation between explosion of creativity and start of its examination? In the second half of the 20th century, hundreds of millions of people in the West have become richer than anyone in the history. According to Diamandis, Kotler [25] we expect the age of abundance. And *future is better than we think*, they say in the subtitle of their book. This should be ensured by progress in artificial intelligence, robotics, infinite computing, broadband telecommunication networks, nanomaterials, synthetic biology. Are people at the beginning of the new millennium also happier than never before? Or is it geographically differentiated, and hundred millions of people in prospering middle class in China, India and other countries of the former Third World are growing more content, while several generations prospering Western society seething in postmodern emptiness and meaninglessness of their lives are drowning in depressions? The only phenomena increasing with the growth of wealth are phenomena of social pathology along with “feeling of unspecified insecurity, ubiquitous and therefore more daunting and depressing” [26]. According to Juvin & Lipovetsky [27] “Over the last 30 years, the purchasing power of the French middle class nearly doubled, however, would anyone dare to say that its members are also twice as happy? There is an increasing number of symptoms of anxiety and depression, existential worries and suicidal attempts. In the Western countries, the number of cases of confessed depressions has increased sevenfold during the last 30 years. Eleven percent of sixteen-year-olds in France has already attempted to commit suicide.” The stated

facts are a manifestation of a collapse of the western civilization which Fforde [28] called *desocialisation*.

What is then the meaning and measure of “progress” or “social and economic development”? According to Florida and supporters of his concept of creative class it is creativity with its applications as a postmodern phenomenon. Postmodernism with its refusal of truth says that objectivity is the view from nowhere. In science-with exception of mainstream human sciences-postmodernism is not accepted. It shows that it brought only a civilization cramp at the end of a long period of modernism, and there is something new on the horizon, “a second modernism” according to Beck. In the applied sciences orienting on social and economic development is a valid knowledge that “with some degree of simplification, it is possible to accept that the economic success in majority states and regions of Europe in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterized with a strong emphasis on the creation, spreading and using of knowledge” [29].

The answer to the question whether creativity is goal or means is clear-creativity is means with potential to make human life better, just like to destroy it. It is important, but not more important than other phenomenon – quality of life, globalization, environment, knowledge, wisdom. More important is to research work, to spread and use knowledge, both tacit and explicit. Despite the attention that Richard Florida gained with his concept of creative class, and despite several his applications in a form of creative cities, creative economy or creative industries, this perception of creativity means to perceive it as an ideologically enforced goal [30].

## Conclusion

The aim of the contribution was to sketch creativity in a context of its relations and sense. There is no generally accepted definition of creativity, not even in its psychological domain. Also, there is no consensus regarding the question whether creativity primarily lies in thinking or outcome. We mentioned several milestones in the history and a question why the development had the described form and not another. Geniuses enriched the world culture and knowledge, after WW II there was an exponential growth of inventions, technologies and innovations. The number of scientific articles devoted to creativity increases as well as the number of citations or results in the web search engines. The accompanying phenomenon of this development is the polarization of understanding of creativity. On one hand, scientists develop approaches,

categories, models, connections with knowledge or wisdom and try to measure it. On the other hand, in the public and political sphere creativity has become a “right” and thereby apologists of this understanding based on the work of Florida [2,4] moved it to the ideology of the New Left. Since the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the growth of prosperity and new technologies, the Western civilization has been developing as secular, faith in God has been replaced by faith in reason and progress, which resulted in the Nazi Holocaust and Communist gulags. In the 60<sup>th</sup> of the last century this society massively grew rich and its individualism as one of its main characteristics turned it into a wasteful society, where the sole purpose of being is shopping and the inevitable life in debt. Destruction of social capital created a life with “liquid” relationships, as they are called by Bauman, leading to depression and nothingness. Sciences about human celebrate this development as a postmodern with rejection of the existence of objective truth. In addition, the public is constantly being manipulated by media through news about an excess of people, despite the fact that this society is dying out.

According to Florida and supporters of his concept of creative class, the meaning and measure of “progress” or “social and economic development” is creativity with its applications as a postmodern phenomenon. However, in science – with exception of mainstream human sciences – postmodernism is not accepted. It shows that it brought only a civilization cramp at the end of a long period of modernism, and there is something new on the horizon, “a second modernism” according to Beck. In the applied sciences orienting on social and economic development is a valid knowledge that “with some degree of simplification, it is possible to accept that the economic success in majority states and regions of Europe in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterized with a strong emphasis on the creation, spreading and using of knowledge” [29].

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