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THE NATURE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY AND “CREATIVE INDUSTRIES”

Abstract: the article critically analyzes the widespread views on the problems associated with creative activity, on the composition and role of the so-called creative class and creative industries. The author shows that many popular views, despite their widespread prevalence, do not stand up to either theoretical or empirical testing. At the same time, these distorted ideas did not appear from scratch, but reflect, firstly, the increased role of creative activity, and, secondly, the specific framework in which creative activity is placed in the conditions of modern capitalism. The author contrasts these ideas with his own view of the nature and prospects of creative activity, which can and should be put at the service of the goals of human development.

Keywords: creative activity, creative class, creative industries, cognition, technology, noonomy, noohuman.

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创造活动性质与“创新工业”

摘要:文章批判性地分析了常见的关于创造活动方面问题以及“创新”阶层和“创新工业”的构成和作用的观点。作者说明了这些观点都经受不住理论和实践的检验。并且,这些被扭曲的认识反映了创造活动作用的增强和现代资本主义社会环境对它的限制。作者阐述了自己对这种应服务于人类及其发展的创造活动的性质和前景的看法。

关键词:创造活动、创新阶层、创新工业、认识、技术、智慧经济、智慧人

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The topic of human creativity has long attracted the attention of researchers. Philosophers, sociologists and economists try to conceptualise it. And understandably so: creativity is one of the fundamental features of human existence and therefore requires philosophical understanding; creative activity obviously affects social stratification and therefore becomes the subject of so-

biological research; and finally, the significant increase in the economic role of creative activity deserves evaluation from the perspective of economics.

Understanding the place and role of creativity in people's lives requires an integrated, interdisciplinary approach. The study of creativity from the perspective of a single science is one-sided and therefore fraught with biased or even false conclusions.

Research in the field of human creativity is not happy with terminology. Very common terms such as homo creator, creative class and creative economy are either poorly defined or the term itself is poorly chosen.

It is easy to see this as a mere terminological confusion and hope that all problems can be solved by clarifying the terminology. However, the problem is much more serious - the "sloppiness" in terms is related to an insufficiently deep understanding of the nature of creative activity.

The use of the Latin term homo creator in connection with the problem of creative activity seems to be unsuccessful. For some reason it is used in the sense of "creative person". But in Latin a creative person is partum persona. And homo creator literally means the Creator (God). Whether we believe in God or are atheists - from both positions, such a framing of the question (the word "substitution" keeps coming to mind... in mathematics, it's the replacement of one thing with another - in other words, a substitution!) should be rejected. And one more thing: this term entered science in a completely different sense and in a different field - in the sphere of genetic eugenics. It was used by supporters of eugenic theories to denote a person who represented the standard for producing perfect offspring.

Founder of the Russian Eugenics Society (1920-1930), academician Nikolai Konstantinovich Koltsov, wrote in his work "Improving the Human Race": "And to this day, many sociologists, naively - from a biologist's point of view - believe that any improvement in the well-being of certain population groups, any increase in their cultural level, must inevitably be reflected in a corresponding improvement in their offspring, and that precisely this influence on the environment and the elevation of culture are the best ways to improve the human race. Modern biology rejects this path" [Koltsov, 1923, web].

What path can modern biology suggest? Read on: "The best and only method to achieve the goal of racial eugenics is to select valuable producers based on their hereditary traits: physically strong, endowed with outstanding mental or moral abilities, and place all these talents in conditions where they can not only fully express these abilities but also feed and raise a large family, and, moreover, predominantly in comparison with people not exceeding the average norm. This advantage is the eugenic value, as equality of reproduction conditions for both outstanding and mediocre people will only lead to an increase in the overall population and will not change the desirable hereditary traits of the human race. The nation that values its talents more than others and learns to put them in better living conditions early enough will give humanity the largest number of representatives of the highest type of Homo creator" [Koltsov, 1923, web].

Times of Koltsov have long passed, and his fashionable ideas, misinterpreted by well-known proponents of "improving the human race", have lost their scientific basis with the development of science about humans and society. The term itself has successfully transitioned into modern social science.

From the perspective of modern science, the ability for creativity (like any human trait) has biological prerequisites, which can vary among different individuals. However, the ability for creativity itself is a trait that has a purely social origin. In any case, there is a problem with the re-

relationship between the influence of biological prerequisites and societal conditions on creativity. For example, no one has yet discovered a biologically innate ability of a person to solve problems of elementary particle physics without the corresponding education, complex mathematical apparatus, and equipment - and those certainly don't have a biological nature!

So, borrowing the term "homo creator" from eugenics supporters, which is accompanied by a dubious theoretical background, is not the best choice.

For different reasons, research on human creative activity has not been fortunate with terms that use the adjective "creative": creative class, creative industries. There is nothing to object to the terms themselves, but their substantive content, which has gained widespread use in science, departs from their literal meaning – thereby, there is a "substitution" of meanings – an incorrect interpretation of the concept of creativity. Creativity is now understood as originality, inventiveness (in the sense of resourcefulness, not the ability to invent), cleverness, the ability to stand out and surprise.

Why does this happen? The answer is not straightforward; it requires an economic, and to some extent, a political-economic analysis. The shift in concepts is related, in our view, to an imprecise interpretation of the nature of creative activity under the influence of the characteristics of modern capitalism.

Creativity is closely connected with the process of cognition, and its basis lies in gaining new knowledge through the process of grasping objective truth and applying this knowledge in practical activity. However, it cannot be said that creative industries have no relation to creativity at all. But in most areas commonly considered part of the creative industries, the focus is not on creative processes per se, but more on processes of transforming knowledge from one form to another, adaptable for end-users (translating a technical concept into a drawing, recording a song onto technical media, and so on). Of course, there is an element of creative process here – in creating a new form of knowledge or representation. For example, creating and performing a song for the first time is undoubtedly a creative act, but only to the extent that it contributes to the growth of human culture.

However, a significant portion of "creativity," aimed at achieving a market effect, is used to shape and impose simulated needs on consumers, to invent simulacrum products that create an illusion of satisfying those needs. The market is ready to entice consumers down any twisted paths, as long as it contributes to product sales. As Slavoj Žižek observes: "Today, the cultural-economic apparatus itself, in order to reproduce itself under conditions of market competition, is forced not only to endure but also actively provoke increasingly strong shocking effects and products" [Žižek, 2008, web]. The creative class is actively involved in creating such "creatives." The creative class is, to a large extent, a result of modern trends in the development of the service sector, characterized by the hypertrophy of the financial and entertainment sectors, with mass-market-oriented culture aggressively displacing authentic culture [Danilov-Danilyan, 2009].

The prominent theory of the creative class by American sociologist Richard Florida [Florida, 2005] largely reflects the distortion that creative activity itself and the theoretical concepts about it undergo in the system of modern capitalism. Florida avoids precise definitions of the fundamental theoretical assumptions from which he starts, replacing them with vague descriptions (a characteristic feature of Western social sciences). This allows for the selection of vague and arbitrarily chosen empirical criteria, leading to a high degree of subjectivity when categorizing professional groups as part of the creative class. Florida essentially ignored the opinion of the

founder of the theory of the creative economy, John Howkins, who noted the complexity of a precise theoretical distinction between creative and non-creative activities [Howkins, 2001].

It is difficult not to agree with the view that “in modern industrial societies, the work of almost all professional groups combines creative and purely executive tasks. Technologically advanced production processes and contemporary complex forms of economic organization would face serious disruptions if a significant portion of people employed in industrial production did not possess ‘hidden’ knowledge and the ability to approach problem-solving creatively” [Krätke, 2010, p. 837]. Doesn’t creativity allow poor workers to improvise and survive in the risky environment of modern capitalist cities? [Wilson, Keil, 2008].

Recommendations made by Richard Florida on attracting the creative class to cities to stimulate their economic development, based on very uncertain criteria, have turned out to be just as ambiguous in their consequences. Depending on the criteria chosen by researchers of these processes, the results vary and sometimes even produce directly opposing conclusions. Some researchers found empirical evidence supporting Florida’s recommendations, suggesting that the presence of a creative class has a positive impact on economic development [Stepanova, 2020, pp. 159–161]. Others insisted, “The creative class consistently failed many statistical tests to explain either job growth or wage growth or absolute wage levels. Moreover, individual characteristics of the creative class – talent, technology, and tolerance – negatively correlated with all our economic indicators” [Hoyman and Faricy, 2009, p. 329].

Even Richard Florida’s motives were questioned. Some researchers believed that his recommendations served as a justification for restructuring cities in favor of specific functional elites within the framework of a neoliberal societal model [Brenner, Theodore, 2002].

Many critics of the concept of Florida noted his tendency to recognize the creative nature of the activity only for a certain elite group of professionals. In connection with this, the legitimacy of classifying financiers, business consultants, and politicians as part of the creative class was considered dubious [Huffschnid, 2002; Zeller, 2004; Huffschnid et al., 2007; Krätke, 2010, p. 838].

In an attempt to reject these claims, Florida essentially diluted his own theory of the creative class: “Every single person has creative potential,” he stated on October 2, 2012, at the annual conference of the Council for International Economic Development in Houston. “We have millions of American workers in the service sector, from hairdressers to factory workers, who are highly creative. We simply don’t harness their creative energy as effectively as we should” [Starnier, 2012, web].

Indeed, creativity is an inherent attribute of human activity, even in the most routine, templated, and monotonous work, there are traces of creativity. There are elements of cognition even in the fact that in any work process, an ideal image of the final result is formed. And this image is something a person must create, even if it’s with the help of external instructions.

When we specifically discuss creative activity, we are dealing with a different measure of the presence of creativity, where it becomes a defining factor in the activity. It’s understood that no classification of professions can definitively identify professional groups engaged in creative activity and separate those not involved in creative activities. Therefore, we can only identify groups primarily engaged in creative activity, or more precisely, groups in which the creative component is the determining factor. It’s challenging to precisely determine the focus of creative activity in these groups and whether their creativity is aimed solely at demonstrating novelty and originality of the results, regardless of their nature.

An industry-based approach, like identifying so-called creative industries, is even less suitable for delineating the spheres of creative activity. In every creative industry, no matter how important creative activity may be in it, there is a significant role for personnel performing routine support tasks. For example, it's unlikely that an office manager in a research organization could be classified as a creative worker.

To define the criteria of creative activity more precisely, we need to delve deeper into its content. Another question to address is what the purpose of the creative process is, not just its content. What are we "creating" and why? After all, we can "create" things that we ourselves may find horrifying. If the process of creative activity is primarily based on acquiring new knowledge and applying it in technologies (whether industrial, social, or cultural), then the result of creative activity is determined by its alignment with human needs. If these needs are rational and directed towards creating conditions for human development, then creativity will be rational.

But what if they are not? Even in this case, the activity remains creative, but it takes on the role of a kind of "theft" of people's creative abilities, subtracting from the world of creativity oriented toward human development in favor of creating a world of counterfeit, illusory goods and "creatively" imposing this world on consumers.

Are developers of algorithmic trading software on the stock exchange or creators of targeted online advertising relying on complex analysis of large amounts of customer preference data creative individuals? Certainly, they are. And this creativity plays an important role in the functioning of modern capitalist economies. Modern capitalism cannot function without advertising and the stock market. However, there is a limit beyond which the pursuit of private interests turns into a pursuit of success at any cost, at the expense of destabilizing the financial market or forming "induced" simulated needs in consumers. Such creativity becomes a search for means to divert resources from human development in favor of purely economic success criteria, regardless of what is behind that success.

Certainly, creativity, like any human activity, is influenced by the prevailing socio-economic conditions. Currently, these conditions have a dual impact on the utilization of human creative potential. On one hand, there is a significant increase in the importance of knowledge, scientific research, and experimental design, which become the primary drivers of progress in production. This is driven by the nature of modern material production processes, the development of which depends on new knowledge translated into new technologies and products.

On the other hand, there is a growing significance of knowledge aimed at generating profits from financial speculation and the creation of illusions as both new needs and their satisfaction. Those who create these illusions (whether material or spiritual) hold a prominent place in the creative class, pushing scientists, educators, and healthcare professionals into the background.

Should we admire the creative achievements of researchers in the field of artificial intelligence, for example, when their work is geared towards manipulating our consumer choices? [Dezfouli et al, 2020 web]. Are these individuals true creators in the genuine sense? When the pursuit of new knowledge and its application in practical activities is not directed towards knowledge and the technologies derived from it, but rather towards commercial success, it means that the creative process is confined within narrow boundaries, and representatives of the creative class are not so much creating as they are executing a prescribed program in pursuit of financial success. More often than not, this success is achieved through imitation of creativity.

Even worse, in the pursuit of profit, there is an undermining and deformation of socio-cultural norms that compensate for the corrupting influence of “pure gain morality.” Considerable effort is made to blur any basic concepts of human culture and to leave in place this cultural desert, where only economic considerations, serving as a wrapper for the greed for wealth, remain as the driving force, undermining moral standards that serve as natural limits to mercantilist expansion [Bodrunov, 2022, p. 19].

Creativity has become bifurcated, and a significant portion of creative products opposes humanity as something alienated from it, even hostile. The human individual is seen as entirely immersed in the all-subjugating non-human and anti-human world of material objects, where there is no place for their genuine sovereignty as a creative subject [Batishchev, 2015, p. 199].

How can this duality be overcome? The answer lies in the theory of noonomy. It is necessary for “noos” (reason) to become the leading criterion for acquiring and using new knowledge. It is impossible to force a person to behave reasonably towards themselves and their role in the world of everyday activities, especially if socio-economic conditions try to impose economically rational but inherently unreasonable behavior. The restriction of freedom of will inevitably distorts a person’s system of goals and values.

Coercion can yield some results even in creative activities, but this instrument has its limits. Coercion cannot make criteria of reasonableness in creativity become ingrained in the flesh and blood of every person because limiting freedom of will inevitably distorts their system of goals and values.

The theory of noonomy suggests a way out of this situation, which involves the gradual removal of economic criteria from human activity based on the cessation of the struggle for production and consumption resources (on the appropriate technological base, primarily through automated production). These criteria are replaced by criteria of reason and culture that are formed based on the material conditions for the transition to the noosocial stage of human history, where human activity will be directed towards providing conditions for their development.

The transition to the new industrial society of the second generation (NIS.2) creates the necessary material prerequisites for this shift. “Objective processes in the development of knowledge-intensive production in NIS.2 will increasingly free up human time for self-improvement, education, and creativity. Furthermore, even in the diminishing labor activity, the creative component will inevitably increase. In cases where human activity becomes predominantly creative, their preferences will gradually shift from the pursuit of material goods and services to self-realization in the process of creative activity.” [Bodrunov, 2021, p. 26].

So, it’s not about the Homo creator or “creative class” but about the noohuman, who doesn’t just create but does so rationally. Instead of direct coercion or coercion through economic necessity, the focus should be on education, upbringing, and raising cultural awareness. Then, rational criteria for creative activity will become reflections of an individual’s inner conviction.

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