

Review of: "Why the Standard Definition of Creativity Fails to Capture the Creative Act"

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Review for Qeios (Abraham)

Title: Why the Standard Definition of Creativity Fails to Capture the Creative Act.

Abraham's essay makes two critical points concerning the always elusive notion of 'creativity'. The first point is that the standard definition and studies that follow from it fail to fittingly describe the phenomenon (as the act, mind frame and process of creativity), due to the almost exclusive adoption of external frames of reference. According to this view, the creative product is defined, states Abraham, as something novel and useful. The paper then introduces a second point by proposing a new conceptualisation of the phenomenon, starting from an internal frame of reference, according to which creativity can also be defined through the creator's inner experiences or mental life and on the basis of the two parameters of novelty and satisfaction. According to the author, the last notion ('satisfaction'), once introduced in the standard definition of creativity, brings with it the advantage of accommodating many recent definitions of creativity and related concepts, such as meaningfulness (Richards, 2010), adaptivity (Kolodny et al., 2015), re-creation or re-evaluation of the known (Lubart, 1999), original, originating, and fitting (Pope, 2005, pp. 59-60). This different criterion for assessing creativity, proposed in the essay, then introduces the internal frame of reference alongside the dominant external frame.

Besides the importance of the two points made by the author (problems in the current definition of creativity, need to integrate the internal frame of reference in that definition), I would like to make a few suggestions that might improve the methodological and argumentative quality of the essay.

First of all, that which the author calls the "internal" frame of reference as opposed to the "external" one is not a novelty but one primary criterion in the definition of creativity since ancient times (*e.g.* Plato and Plotin), and it has notoriously been re-evaluated during the Romantic era, through reference to the key notions of imagination (Engell, 1981; Taylor, 1989) and *genius* (Becker, 2000). The same concept of "internal frame of reference" used by the author should be rephrased, as many scholars, such as Sawyer, for instance, speak more correctly and precisely of "individual" vs "sociocultural" approaches to the definition of creativity, besides adding that a combination of "both approaches will converge on a complete explanation of creativity" (Sawyer, 2012, p. 36). Therefore, the methodological part of the essay should be integrated with a more in-depth analysis of the literature.

Another weakness of the essay is the almost total neglect of the internalised aspects of the creative process (incubation, imagination, intuition, to mention just a few), even though it deals precisely with this dimension. These are crucial notions

in any definition and assessment of creativity as a mental, individual, and, therefore, “internal” phenomenon. Therefore, they should be integrated into the argument's progression to improve its depth and originality.

Finally, it should be noted that a more interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon must be advocated in an increasingly globalised world, where the process, politics and even the technological practices of creativity currently undergo radical changes with unprecedented speed towards collective rather than individual creativity and multileveled variety rather than uniformity. In 2023, any new contribution to the scholarly conceptualisation of creativity should take these issues into more serious account and, in addition to that, use new mental concepts and theories. Unfortunately, this essay fails to do both and should be developed further in these directions.

To sum up, the essay focuses on a fascinating subject and has the merit of introducing a new working definition of creativity. To improve its methodological and argumentative force, the author should expand the critical frame of reference by integrating other key notions, such as imagination, and broader scholarly theorisation on this subject. Finally, an interdisciplinary approach is inescapable. As Hennessey and Amabile once stated, “[o]nly by using multiple lenses simultaneously, looking across levels, and thinking about creativity systematically, will we be able to unlock and use its secrets” (Hennessey & Amabile, 2012, p. 590).

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