

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

Douglas Hodgson¹

¹ Université du Québec à Montréal

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article is thought-provoking and helps clarify certain issues regarding the nature of creativity and the assessment of creative contributions. The standard definition of creativity that the paper critiques does, in my view, have important uses and should not necessarily be jettisoned. According to this definition, an idea is creative if it is novel and useful. The paper maintains that this definition, in being entirely reception-based, omits from consideration aspects of creation that may be of importance only to the creator. Now, for the evaluation and judgment of contributions to professional creative fields, it seems to me that the standard definition is adequate. If it is my job to produce creative content for the marketplace of ideas, reception is all that matters as far as the value of the work is concerned. Whether I am satisfied with my work or not, or how I judge the relative quality of my different contributions, is not relevant to the judgment of this work by the field, or the public generally. Maybe I hate some work of mine, or was in total misery while producing it, but it winds up being positively evaluated by my peers.

However, there are other ways in which creative activity can be important in the general range of human existence.

Engaging in amateur creative activity can be beneficial to the individual in many ways, and so a better understanding of how it works and how it can be promoted at the individual level can be useful in ways not covered by the standard definition. Understanding how engagement in creative activity gives satisfaction may allow for a general increase in overall human satisfaction, which is, after all, the objective of all purposeful human activity. In addition, understanding the process of creation can in principle improve its practice in the case of professionals and make for better professional output, as well as better preparing or identifying young individuals who may have talent in such areas and so be better directed to pursuing careers.

So although the concept of the creator's internal satisfaction as proposed in the paper is important in some contexts, it is, in my view, not important in all contexts. Perhaps a multiple definition is required which distinguishes which properties are most important for different categories of creative activity, and for what reasons.