



CREATIVITY UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: A REFLECTION ON CREATIVITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF SCIENCE

Milica Drobac Pavićević (2020). *What is creativity really?* Banja Luka: Imprimatur and Faculty of Philosophy Banja Luka, 24 cm, 251 pp.

The book explores human creativity through various dimensions, and as such, it is intended for a wide audience, ranging from experts and educational professionals to interested laypeople.

The very title of the book *What is creativity really?* constructed in the form of a question associates with the search for a deeper, more essential understanding of creativity. The question in the title suggests that what we often mean by creativity may not be the whole picture and invites the reader to question their own assumptions and discover what “really” lies behind the term. The book presents a comprehensive and at the same time accessible presentation of the complex concept of creativity. The author successfully combines theoretical knowledge from psychology, biology, and pedagogy with examples from real life, achieving something rare in (academic) literature – not only informing the reader but also inspiring them. The book is structured into three main sections:

1. *Introduction* – this chapter addresses the theoretical foundations of creativity. Through an analysis of the history of the concept and its significance, the author introduces the reader to the philosophical and theological foundations of creativity, with a particular focus on thinkers such as Henri Bergson and Nikolai Berdyaev. The chapter then explores key concepts, including what creativity is not, as well as terms that are important for understanding it. It examines the internal mechanisms of the creative process and the everyday use of terms that are often mistakenly equated with creativity. The author identifies creativity with the concept of *creative thought* within the field of psychology of creativity.

2. *Theories of creativity in psychology* – this chapter contains psychological approaches and contemporary theories of creativity, such as component theory, investment theory, and the concept of *flow*, with a focus on one (non)contemporary theory.

3. *The role of the education system in expressing and encouraging creativity* – the focus of the third part is on the practical aspects of: how the education system can recognize, develop, and encourage creativity in students. Special attention is paid to the role of schools and educators, as well as specific guidelines and techniques that can help create a supportive environment for the development of creativity in education.

The monograph on creativity opens up new horizons and brings the phenomenon of creativity closer to readers. Approaching such a complex concept, the author ingeniously analyzes what creativity is, and then what it is not. This is mostly reminiscent of Đuro Šušnjić's book *Religion I*, which also attempts to define the very complex phenomenon of religion. Namely, the author analyzes what creativity is, and then what it is not, just as Šušnjić elaborates on what religion is not, in order to finally say what it is, which is reminiscent of the method of elimination and the apophatic method (Greek *apophasis* – negation). Of the many definitions of creativity listed in this book, perhaps the best definition is that given by James Rhodes: *it is a phenomenon by which a person communicates a new concept, or the definition that says that it is a product that meets the minimum criteria of being new, purposeful, and useful.*

The chapter on the evolution of the genus *Homo* and creativity may be considered unusual. While one might conclude that this segment has no place in a book about creativity, it is significant because understanding the biological development of the genus *Homo* shows how creative abilities, such as problem solving, symbolic thinking, and tool making, were essential for human survival and evolution. Creativity is therefore not only a cultural, but also a biological trait rooted in our species. In this sense, additional information that connects the biological and psychological dimensions of creativity contributes to the breadth of view that the book offers, as does the reference to individual authors, such as Yuval Noah Harari and many others, which opens up additional lines of thought.

Also, commendable and immediately noticeable is the terminological adaptation of scientific explanations for both professional and lay audiences, and the two most striking leitmotif pillars of the entire manuscript are the myth of the Sphinx and Plato's myth of the cave, which are very subtly composed within the framework of

the polemic on creativity. Of particular note is the way in which the author uses examples from nature, biographies of famous scientists, and Nobel laureates to illustrate various aspects of creative thinking. It is precisely such examples that are most easily absorbed into long-term memory and remain as lasting knowledge and stimuli for further thinking.

The most significant chapter for the educational-pedagogical milieu is the third: *The role of the educational system in expressing and encouraging creativity*. The spaces for work (empty windows for manual writing), as well as examples and analogies from everyday life, which the author often cites, e.g., seeds in the desert waiting for rain (just as an idea waits for suitable conditions to grow into creativity) are innovative and particularly enrich the book. For example, a newly hatched eagle, which, after spending nine years in a cage, turns into a clumsy ostrich, penguin or chicken (our education system keeps children in mental cages for 9 years...), here the author gives a humorous conclusion – the eagle eventually eats the chicken (*As important as it is to understand how to remove chains and how we become free, it is equally important how to remove chains from others and set them free. In this latter case, teachers and the education system are the most invited.* – author). The additional value of the book is also made up of numerous insights from the author's professional practice, which give the book a personal and life dimension. There is a striking anecdote about a student who chose fashion and style as the topic of the *NaUm* project, why her mentor found the topic irrelevant (*It is important that every idea is given equal chance to come to life. This is especially important for the education system because it is the one most called upon to express creativity.* – author). That example illustratively shows how important it is to recognize and develop creative potential, even in relation to topics that, at first glance, may not fit within conventional educational frameworks. The book points out another worrying point of view: our teachers are like Sphinxes, because they are looking for only one answer, often stifling divergent thinking. It is clear that the author's goal is to create a school atmosphere that values imagination and creativity and frees students from "shackles" and uniformity. So much is said about it, but we are mostly aware that it is only a letter on paper, at least for now. Such a system of "shackles" is still practiced in probably 80% of our educational institutions (personal assessment). In this regard, the University of Donja Gorica (the so-called Balkan Harvard) is one of the few universities in our country that strongly promotes imagination, interdisciplinarity, and creativity, and organizes part of its teaching accordingly. The basic principle of this University is Einstein's statement: "Imagination is more important than

knowledge". This premise is a thread that often runs through the book. The value of the book is also recognized in its broad, interdisciplinary approach, because in addition to psychological aspects, it also includes views from pedagogy, philosophy, mythology, art, and sociology. In doing so, the author goes beyond the limitations of traditional psychometric approaches and contributes to a deeper, culturally informed understanding of creativity. She not only challenges established views of creativity – such as the romanticized idea that it is always positive and desirable – but also highlights its double-edged nature, pointing out that creative ideas can have negative, even destructive outcomes. Such critical thinking is important because it introduces an ethical dimension and raises the question of social responsibility in relation to the idealized image of creativity. The book also briefly reviews the connection between artificial intelligence and psychology.

The scientific contribution of the book, especially its third part on the education system, is not limited to the theoretical mapping of the concept in focus but is also recognized in its applicability in educational psychology. The author connects empirical insights with school practice, offering guidelines for teachers, parents, and students on ways to encourage creative thinking and creative work. In this way, the book builds a bridge between scientific research and pedagogical needs, making it relevant for both researchers and practitioners in education. Although it is basically a synthesized, essay-like scientific work, and not unique empirical research, its value lies primarily in its comprehensiveness, coherence of presentation, and clear indication of gaps in existing literature. In addition, Guilford's list of questions for teachers from 1973 leaves a strong impression – not only as a historical document, but also as an inspiration for contemporary educational practice.

Instead of an ending, let's return to the beginning. Viewed as a whole, such a book should enrich the personal libraries of educators, as well as all creative enthusiasts and innovators, opening new perspectives and expanding the discourse on the phenomenon of creativity. It should particularly encourage educators to "liberate the minds" of young generations. The content of *What is creativity really?* not only answers the question posed in the title but also encourages readers to ask that question repeatedly, teaching us that creativity is not exclusively the domain of art or genius, but a capacity that we can all develop.

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