A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONFUSION IN CURRENT DISCUSSIONS OF CREATIVITY: ITS BASIS IN DUALISTIC THINKING

George H. Kincaid
Mars Hill College
Mars Hill, North Carolina

Introduction

The study of creativity has been extremely popular since 1950 when J. P. Guilford made the observation that the topic was being virtually ignored.

As the number of books, articles and research studies have increased, the amount of confusion about the nature of creativity has increased correspondingly.

There are many possible explanations as to why confusion about creativity exists and this paper merely offers one such possibility. A careful review of the literature of creativity reveals that many writers tend to employ what may be termed dualistic thinking. Dualistic thinking refers to a tendency to confuse conceptual inquiry with factual inquiry; that is, to attempt to separate in fact those things which may be separated in thought. We may make a "distinction in thought" between a process and its product, between a group and the members of a group, between words and meaning and between numbers and numerals, but these things cannot be separated in fact.

The literature of creativity invariably poses and discusses the questions: Is creativity a process or a product? Is creativity a conscious or an unconscious process? Is intelligence related to creativity? What are the relations of the creative individual and his environment? How is society opposed to the creative individual?

It has been observed that questions of this type often lead to dualistic thinking which then becomes a source of misinterpretation and confusion about creativity.

The purpose of this study was to locate some of the major areas of confusion in the current literature of creativity and to show how dualistic thinking had contributed to its development.

Process and Product

The word "creation" is highly subject to what is known as the process-product ambiguity. It can be used to denote

either the activity of bringing something into being, or it can stand for the result of that activity--that which is created. The word "creativity" is also ambiguous and is sometimes used to refer to the act of creating and sometimes to the result of that act. Because of this difficulty, many writers have asked the question, "Is creativity a process or a product."

Carpenter (3) and Anderson (1) assert that in creativity the product is often confused with the process and that in the past creativity as product has been given greater attention. A review of the literature does reveal that the use of products as the criterion of creativity is often encountered in studies produced in technological and industrial settings. Other writers such as Stein (14), Rogers (13) and Lasswell (9) emphasize product in their very definition of creativity.

There are those, however, who say that this approach to creativity is undesirable and their conflicting opinions sometimes lead to rather severe criticism. Torrance (16), for example, says that viewing creativity as product is an obstacle in valuing the concept itself. Others say that a stress on products leads to a disregard of the person who displays creative potential.

Thus two diverse and often antagonistic approaches to creativity have been identified. The shift in emphasis from product to process when writing of creativity opens the way for dualistic thinking. Process and product often become two different events, separate in nature, with no degree of overlap or continuity.

There are many undesirable educational practices which may result from dualistic thinking about process and product. The teacher becomes confused about what criterion she should employ in recognizing creative ability. If creativity is a product, the teacher may turn full attention to the visible outpourings of a student and less to what processes lead to them. On the other hand, if the emphasis in creativity is placed entirely upon the process, the teacher may concentrate wholly on the student's mental processes and pay little attention to the results of these processes. In the latter case how does the teacher recognize or identify those ideas which could be considered creative?

The question of whether creativity is a process or a product would never have to be asked if creativity were viewed as a continuous whole, including both the act of creating and the resulting products of that act. Dualistic thinking could be eliminated if creativity was seen as the

deliberate instituting of connections between what is done (process) and its consequences (product). To ignore one or the other will result in the destruction of fruitful thought.

Intelligence and Creativity

In the period prior to 1950, creativity was commonly linked to intelligence. The highly intelligent person was thought to be highly creative and vice versa. It was also common to identify intelligence and the intelligence quotient as having the same meaning. But during the 1940's and 1950's several studies were produced which stated that intellect was a multidimensional affair and that the abilities that appeared to be components of creativity, although still part of intellect, were not being measured by I.Q. tests.

After the introduction of Getzels and Jackson's study entitled Creativity and Intelligence (6), it was generally concluded by most researchers that I.Q. and creativity were different dimensions of intellect. These findings soon led many writers and readers of the literature of creativity to the conclusion that intelligence and creativity were different, separate, and independent. As a result of this distinction, many were led to believe that among the general population one might locate some individuals who were intelligent and some who were creative, but seldom could one find an individual who was both creative and intelligent.

According to Elliot Eisner (5), the work of Getzels and Jackson and others has led to the view that intelligence and creativity are "mutually exclusive." Much of the current literature now states that creativity is different from either learning or intelligence, or that creative and intellectual capacities are totally independent. One writer has even gone as far as to distinguish creativity from the thinking process itself (12).

This distinction or separation that has now been drawn between intelligence and creativity leads to another type of dualistic thinking. When the works of Thurston (15), Guilford (8) and Getzels and Jackson are analyzed, it is found that they do not draw a line between intellect and creativity but rather between traits that may be subsumed under the term "creativity" and those such as verbal fluency, perception of spatial relationships, etc., which have traditionally been measured by tests.

Although much of the dualistic thinking which separates intelligence and creativity arises from semantic confusion, it has led to some rather dubious educational practices. For

example many teachers now ignore or deny the merits of the most commonly used I.Q. tests on the grounds that those who score highly will not be creative. Others may begin to lavish more attention upon either what they consider the intelligent child or what they consider the creative child. The choice depends upon which concept is valued more by the teacher. With the separation of intelligence and creativity also comes the separation of knowledge and creativity. Since the ability to recall answers depends greatly upon the learning of subject matter, and this ability has long been viewed as an indicator of intelligence, then teachers must present subject matter in order to foster intelligence. But the studies of creativity have indicated that recalling answers is not necessarily a good indication of creative ability. Thus the learning of subject matter may not be important in producing creative thinking. Thus if intelligence and creativity are two separate factors which are independent of one another the teacher is placed in a dilemma. Will she teach subject matter and thereby produce "intelligent" children, or will she avoid teaching subject matter and thus produce creative children.

This type of unnecessary question may be avoided when creativity is viewed as a part of the intellectual process which interacts and is continuous with intellectual abilities as a whole. This may be done partly with the elimination of the careless use of the terms "intelligence" and "intelligence quotient." Common I.Q. measures may be shown not to include creative abilities, but this does not mean that creative abilities may operate independently of the total process of intellect which includes those traits measured by I.Q. tests.

The Conscious and the Unconscious

Many well-known writers have emphasized the role of the subconscious, preconscious or unconscious mind in the creative process. Anderson (1) says the unconscious is a "place" where one's "self" may go for protection against the hostile world. Much of the literature of creativity says that it is in this "place" that creative ideas are born and it is here that these ideas "incubate" and strive to escape into consciousness.

To many writers, the conscious and unconscious are intricate structures within the mind which may operate independently. Creative ideas have their origins in some sort of vague, undefined emotional turmoil or chaotic muddle of ideas existing in the unconscious. The conscious mind is regarded as a regulatory agency which interprets and makes meaningful these ideas of the unconscious.

Some descriptions of the interactions that take place between the conscious and unconscious indicate that these two "structures" are often at odds with one another. Maslow likens the relationship between the two to a kind of "civil war." According to Maslow (10) the conscious and unconscious may even become "walled off" from one another. It would appear then that from this type of description the conscious and unconscious are two different regions of mind, with different capacities and goals, and with the ability to oppose or wall off one from the other. This separation can lead to some rather confusing educational practices.

Those who claim that creative ideas stem from the unconscious will often suggest that such ideas have to be "coaxed" from their seat of origin into the conscious realm. The best method of accomplishing this task, they say, is to expose the child to subject matter which consists mainly of the fine arts. One writer says we promote creativity best through drama, another says creative dancing, another, through music.

On the other hand, some writers say that creativity is a function of the conscious mind. Accordingly it can best be fostered through studies in the sciences, particularly logic and mathematics.

All of this can be slightly confusing to teachers who wish to promote creativity in their children. Should the teacher stress the arts or the sciences? If creativity either stems from the conscious or the unconscious but not both, then either the arts or the sciences should be stressed, but not both.

We have thus identified another area in which dualistic thinking has led to confusion. The separation of the conscious and unconscious can be accomplished in thought simply because they are theoretical concepts. The problem arises when one attempts to regard the concepts as entities which may be separated in reality. Many years ago John Dewey warned of the tendency to confuse conceptual inquiry with factual inquiry when discussing the conscious and unconscious. Speaking of the word "conscious" Dewey said:

> We are only too given to making an entity out of the abstract noun "conscious." To be conscious is to be aware of what we are about; conscious signifies the deliberate, observant, planning traits of activity. (4)

And of the subconscious Dewey added:

> The deification of the subconscious is legitimate
> only for those who never indulge in it--animals
> and thoroughly healthy naive children--if there be
> any such. (4)

To Dewey then, the unconscious was no more an "entity" than
the conscious. Both are conceptual inventions which may be
distinguished in thought but never separated in existence.
The confusion which arises in respect to dualistic thinking
in this area can be eliminated when the conscious and uncon-
scious are viewed as terms designating certain mental pro-
cesses which operated in a conscious manner. They may oper-
ate in such a manner as to produce certain behaviors which
may be termed "creative" but they do not operate independ-
ently of each other or from any of the other mental processes.
To regard them as separate and disconnected can only lead to
confusion and undesirable practice.

The Creative Individual and
the Social and Cultural Environment

There is a tendency in the current literature of crea-
tivity to discuss the creative individual as a person who
must operate independently of the social environment. This
trend has been noted by Anderson (1) and others who state
that the interaction between the creative individual and his
environment is often ignored in current writings. Indeed it
is sometimes found that reference is made to the environment
as an outside intruder whose influence is detrimental to the
thinking of creative individuals.

There sometimes appear remarks which can only be inter-
preted to mean that the individual and his environment are
in fact, discontinuous, separate, and independent. An exam-
ple of such a statement comes from Michael Andrews in the
preface to his book Creativity and Psychological Health:

> According to our definition of creativity the self,
> which is an ineluctable unity comes into composure
> with the world and at the same time is different,
> separate, free and independent. (2)

The separation of the individual and his environment in
discussions of creativity produce various results in the
schools. It appears that those who accept creativity as a
sole function of the individual favor a curriculum composed
mainly of the arts. Those who see creativity stemming from
the environment often stress the sciences.

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This form of dualistic thinking also contributes heavily to the argument over whether or not conformity is detrimental to creative thinking. Some writers claim that if an individual conforms to any aspect of social living his creative potential will be destroyed. Thus they would rule out any type of education which deals with "life adjustment" or social convention. Many of these writers have extolled so-called "beatnik" behavior because it is directly opposed to social conformity. Even the practice of wearing a beard has been held up as a sign of creativity.

On the other hand we find writers who condemn practices that favor "unconventional" behavior. They feel that it is nonsensical to contend that the school should not be responsible for developing common attitudes and beliefs in students.

Thus the teacher is again placed in a dilemma. Should she stress unconventional and beatnik behavior in her students and thus promote creativity, or should she stress social behavior, common attitudes, etc. and fulfill the responsibility of the school but at the same time destroy creative potential?

Another result of dualistic thinking in regard to the individual and the environment is the argument over whether creativity is an individual or a group process. Those who say that creativity can best be promoted in groups favor such educational methods as group discussion and "brainstorming" techniques. This approach is proposed by Osborn (11) and others.

The opposing group asserts that creativity is destroyed when individuals are not left entirely alone to do "their own thinking" and to do their work in complete absence of outside stimuli.

Thus we find those who say that creativity is destroyed by conformity and those who say it is not. We find some saying that creativity is an individual process and some saying it is a group process. This type of dualistic thinking causes confusion and conflict in proposals for fostering creativity in education.

Dualistic thinking in this regard could be eliminated if the individual and his environment are not seen as separate or independent entities. Geiger (7) points out that the terms "individual" and "society" are abstractions that can be distinguished in thought but not separated in reality.

When they are thought of as having a fixed meaning and to refer to entities with an independent status, so that "society" comes to be regarded as a thing-in-itself, having its own values as opposed to those of the individual, we find controversy and confusion. When, however, the individual and his environment are viewed as continuous, creativity can never be studied in terms of what goes on within a person without regard to what goes on in the world. Conformity then becomes a part of the creative process that may be desirable or undesirable depending upon the nature of the situation. Group processes may be seen as good or bad depending upon whether or not the individual is able to do "his own thinking" within the group.

Conclusion

It has been suggested in this paper that in order to eliminate dualistic thinking as an obstacle to the understanding of creativity, one should view creativity as a unified whole. One should be aware when reading the literature of creativity that those traits, characteristics, or factors which are necessary for the production of creative thinking are not separate, independent entities, but are interacting, overlapping elements which all contribute to the whole of creativity. Dualistic thinking which leads to a view that these various elements of creative thinking may be separate or independent of one another will continue to cause confusion and conflict in education. Both readers and writers of the literature of creativity must learn to recognize and combat dualistic thinking before creativity can be a useful concept in educational practice.

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