

# Creativity as the Act of Transcending Oneself and the World: from Creativity to Transcendence

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## ABSTRACT

The text aims to present how creativity and creative behaviours, understood as an act of transcending oneself and the world, can positively influence the fields of art, science, education and upbringing. A constitutional feature of creativity is its ability to transcend what is fixed, tamed and predictable, both individually and globally, at the microcosmic and macrocosmic level ; to transcend what is within us and outside us. The author of the article analyzes the following issues: is there a positive aspect to creativity understood as the act of transcendence? And, given such an understanding of creativity, are all acts of creation, whether they involve the creation of great works of art, the pursuit of science, the processes of education and upbringing, or simply the resolution of daily problems, more spiritual than intellectual?

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What is creativity? Is it the ability to produce something or the ability to express oneself? Is it external activity or rather internal curiosity? Is it a predisposition that is innate or an attitude that one acquires? In any case, it seems that the constitutional feature of creativity is its ability to transcend what is fixed, tamed and predictable, both individually and globally, at the level of the microcosm and the macrocosm; to transcend what is within us and outside us.

Is there a positive aspect to creativity understood as the act of transcendence? What are the advantages for the creator, his personal development, and his relationships with other people, the world, the Absolute, when he overcomes his limitations and reaches for the unknown that perhaps may not be reached at all in the process of intellectual cognition, but only through sensation or premonition? And, given such understanding of creativity, are all acts of creation, whether they involve the creation of great works of art, the pursuit of science, the processes of education and upbringing, or simply the resolution of daily problems, more spiritual than intellectual?

I propose that we consider briefly the spheres of human activity which, both in scientific reflection (see e.g.: Szmidt, 2010; Nęcka & Sowa, 2005; Popek, 2001; Karwowski, 2009, Kaufman, 2011; Cudowska, 2004; Nęcka, 2003; Buzan, 2002) and in the common understanding are associated with creativity. The most privileged place among the creative processes seems to be reserved for art, thus let us start our considerations with it.

The Latin phrase "creatio ex nihilo", which for centuries expressed the essence of creativity and reserved this domain for God, was applied by Maciej Sarbiewski in 17th century to poetry (Tatarkiewicz, 2006; Li Vigni, 2005) and then adapted to all the artistic activity of man. When creating, the artist using his imagination expresses the sphere of personal experience; in his works new, non-existent worlds are created. Marcel Proust rightly points out that art provides a proof that apart from nothing there is something (Proust, 1977). Thus, a creative act means crossing the boundaries of the already existing world to one created by the will and force of the artist who works "instar Dei". Researchers note that artistic creativity is close to religious experience because of the association of both phenomena with transcendence (Królikowski, 2017; Chalupecký, 2009). Jindřich Chalupecký states: *The experience of the artist and religious experience stand next to each other. The attitude which is defined as the basis of religious experience, the attitude towards the "valde aliud" – "completely different" – that which is nonhuman or simply sacred is, like the experience of the artist, the attitude of readiness to meet the unknown, inexplicable, and to admit "I do not know"; that is why the texts of many mystics can be read as great poems* (Chalupetský, 2009, p. 185). The artist remains in the "purity of experience" which is individual and personal, but at the same time opens his audience to the original amazement which correlates with unawareness, surprise and the discovery of what is inexpressible. Therefore, according to Chalupecký, art is simply a calling for transcendence which refers us to *the ineffable, the invisible, to silence, to something forever absent* (Chalupecky, 2009, p. 187). This is a particularly important aspect of art today when "religious sense" is disappearing from postmodern societies (Giussani, 2000): art takes on the function of religion in feeding the hunger for transcendence. In an era of global consumerism people above all want to possess, dominate others and use the earth's resources without any moderation, while art makes them think about "to be" rather than "to have" and directs their attention to what is beyond them and beyond the surrounding world. True artistic creativity is, therefore, a cry for fulfilling the functions of art in relation to man and his metaphysical development. Beauty, which is the main aesthetic category of art, is the mysterious key that opens the door of transcendence.

Creative attitude understood as the crossing of boundaries and patterns of thinking is important not only in the work of artists, but also in scientific research. There appears the question of the limits of scientific knowledge. This is a real issue and includes, for example, the laws of physics and nature – like the speed of light in space which is constant and unchangeable. However, this does not stop the human mind from thinking about futuristic visions beyond these limitations. We cannot be absolutely sure whether Einstein's widely accepted theory of relativity will not be questioned by revolutionary scientific discoveries in future.

The methods of exact sciences which, since modern times, have claimed the right to be applicable to all scientific reflection, exclude from areas of scientific interest those questions which at a given moment are impossible to test empirically. Even though this type of attitude has led to undeniable and impressive success in explaining the functioning of the world and the cosmos, it also faces the limitations of its applicability defined by physics. Interestingly, there are still many experimental studies whose results cannot be reconciled with existing paradigms and which scientists cannot explain using modern knowledge.

There is a universal, human need to pursue knowledge, to unveil mysteries, to cross the boundaries of understanding; this need is inherent in humans and adds meaning to their existence. Promoting only the usefulness of research (and its commercialization) has a depleting effect on it and limits its scope. For example, scientists' search for the truth, which should be the basis of all their activity, is always selfless.

What is beyond scientific research may not yet be part of it, but undoubtedly presents a challenge for researchers, giving them the promise of discovering new rules and formulas. In a way, all barriers are there to be broken in the act of creative research. Knowledge, imagination, and going beyond the traditional framework of scientific research allow us to see what is new and what can be perceived as a revolutionary discovery. The scientist's awe resulting from the discovery, on the other hand, is a transcendent experience that shows the meaning and beauty of life and its deepest, still unknown nature.

If a person is not open to transcendence, which allows them to find answers to questions about the meaning of life, they become unable to work for their own and others' benefit. In this context, creative action (understood as an act of transcendence) performed for the development of other people becomes important in the areas of education and upbringing. All actions concerning these two areas adopted in families and in all kinds of institutions should promote cognitive development and care for the harmonious development of young people and include their openness to transcendence as a very important component of the process. If possible at all, to teach creativity means, first of all,

to show opportunities and ways of overcoming obstacles and limitations, crossing borders, finding new paths that have not yet been taken, walking along unknown routes.

A similar approach concerning the development of one's personality should be adopted by those to whom creativity is important in dealing with their life experiences, including traumatic ones. Dąbrowski (1975) has pointed this out when developing his theory of positive disintegration (TPD). According to Ralph Piedmont, spiritual transcendence is a common personality trait for all people around the world (Piedmont, 1999). A man transcending himself becomes directed at the Absolute. Dąbrowski notes that in the process of transcendence the role of thinking and consciousness is limited compared to that of emotional memory and feelings. Love, being the highest and most complete feeling, is the discovery of otherness in oneself and outside oneself, and openness to transcendence in life and in death. The one who loves and is loved does not die, and "though he were dead, yet shall he live". Life in love and freedom opens a person to existence and at the same time to transcendence.

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