

Autonomously Creative Creativity of the Group Organization of Micro Popular Visual Culture

Chung-Yim Lau¹

Summary

Influenced by popular culture, creativity in Asia regions is widely expressed through images explored in various media such as animation, manga, movies, and computer games. These images not only reflect the influence of popular visual culture on creativity, they imply a favourite of a particular aesthetic concept widely accepted by young adolescents from different cultural backgrounds. Excluding the professional image-makers of popular visual culture from a macro perspective as we see in the mass production of Hollywood movies, numbers of creative and armature group like Dōjinshi and Cosplayer, which are increasingly involved in the image making industry, are comparatively small and micro. Referring to the interpretation of creativity of micro popular visual culture and the way of expression of creativity, existing literature concerning these aspects seem insufficient to describe this phenomenon. In such a particular context, how the group organization responds to creativity becomes the main research focus. However, the conventional and existing definition of creativity can hardly explain this phenomenon.

In general, studies in creativity can divide to separate realms. Early literature about creativity lays stress on analysing creativity from two major perspectives. They are, first, the psychoanalytical, mystical, and creative-and-mental views which is mainly suggested by Sternberg and Lubart (1993), Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987), etc.; second, regarding creativity as a problem-solving process advocated by Torrance (1965, 1977, 2002), Wallas (1926), etc. The above understanding of creativity can also be examined through a

¹ Chung-Yim Lau, Assistant Professor, Creative Arts and Physical Education Department, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong. For contact, Email: chungyim@ied.edu.hk

behaviourism approach. For example, through observing human various behaviours, Skinner (1969) and Hargreaves (1986) conclude that creativity can illustrate and show different behaviour patterns. In a certain degree, creativity reflects concrete behaviour. Since the 80s, studies in creativity turn to explore the intelligent dimension to review the relationship between creativity and intelligence. Intelligence theory suggested by Gardner and Winner (1982), Runco (2004), as well as Runco, Dow and Smith (2006), etc. remark that creativity can effectively reflect a thinking map and an intelligent pattern. Unlike Skinner or Gardner, Farley (2001) and Winston (2003) take a scientific approach to examine creativity by viewing creativity as a brain activity that can be understood by neurobiological, brain studies, and genetic engineering methods.

Besides the scientific perspective on investigating creativity, creativity can also be interpreted as a cultural matter. Florida (2002), Ray (1997), as well as Ray and Anderson (2000) raises an issue of cultural creativities from a macro perspective, claiming that creativity should consider the socio-cultural, geographical and economical aspect. Ray and Anderson (2000) use the term “cultural creatives” to describe people’s life styles and creativity in the late 20th Century, in which they respect and are concerned about ecology, human condition, living conditions and quality, being aware of protecting cultural values as well as maintaining a balance between the spiritual and the development of world. Referring to Florida (2002, 2005b), technologies can no longer support the development of new economy since the new world of the 21st Century will be a world of cultural capitals. He further realizes that a new hope for the new development is creativity (Florida, 2002). In a city full of creativity, we find a group of non-mainstream creative people who possess talents, embrace new technologies, and maintain a sound attitude. These people embrace creativity and intelligence, and their efforts are building an innovative economy (Florida, 2005a).

Creativity can also be interpreted from a socio-cultural perspective. Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996) believes that creativity always implies a socio-cultural foundation that influences the development of creativity. While Csikszentmihalyi regards creativity as a combination of three essential elements including individual perspective, domain, and field, Sawyer (2007) tries to break the myths of creativity by suggesting the theory of group genius to further explore the socio-cultural dimension in understanding creativity. Sawyer applies the group power to extend the socio-cultural influence on creativity. In addition, he

highly appreciates the creative power of collaboration, stating that innovative ideas can be generated through the collaborative effort.

The above-mentioned literature about creativity shows a diverse picture of creativity. Some of the approaches to understanding creativity are even contradictory to each other. An example is the psychological approach versus the neurobiological approach. Indeed, the concept of creativity is a diverse and vague one (Stenberg, 1988); even in determining its definition, it has hardly found a consensus. The approach to understanding creativity may include all the realms mentioned previously; however, these may not fully reflect the real context of micro popular visual culture.

According to these backgrounds, this study adopts a case study method to investigate the relationship between the creativity of popular visual culture and the group organization from a micro perspective. Two Dōjinshi's group organization located in Hong Kong were interviewed and discussed within the study. Examining the relationship between the group organisation of micro popular visual culture and creativity aims to understand how the group interprets creativity, inspires creativity, and expresses creativity. The findings of the present study indicate that the group organisation of micro popular visual culture not only reflects an endlessly creative self-managed-and-operated model in image production, but it also hints at the self-expressed, unique group creativity, and spirit of cultural exposure. Creativity in popular visual culture from a micro perspective has meaning only in both the creators and the appreciators themselves. The Dōjinshi's group organization did not intend to create their works to make a living, but they wanted recognition of seeing their self-identity when sharing the images they create with their customers. The relationship between creativity and the group organization demonstrates the ethical spirit and recognition of the particular aesthetic concept, in which both the creator and the appreciator arouse the recognition of identity through the image making process. According to this, group organization contributes to the development of the recognition of identity. In this sense, the creativity of micro popular visual culture plays an essential role of enhancing particular values. It is expected that these points will contribute to the subject and knowledge of popular visual culture.

Keywords: autonomously creative creativity, Dōjinshi, group organization, micro popular visual culture

