Creativity, Freedom and the Crash: how the concept of creativity was used as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War, and as a means to reconcile individuals to neoliberalism prior to the Great Recession

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Abstract

At first glance, creativity in the classroom and global capitalism have little in common, yet scratch beneath the surface of 'creativity' and we find a discourse of economic and cultural freedom that was used as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War, and more recently to reconcile individuals to neoliberalism in the post-Cold War era. This discourse of economic and cultural freedom is evident in various UK government reports and political speeches from the late twentieth century onwards, in which politicians aligned creativity with personal autonomy and cautioned against government interference in the operation of the free market (see for example Blair, 1998; Morris, 2003). The UK's fascination with creativity at the dawn of the new millennium was part of a worldwide interest in innovation and free enterprise. In the words of the Director-General of UNESCO, 'Creativity is our hope' (UNESCO, 2006: 5), and faith in creativity as a means to equip individuals for life under global capitalism is a striking feature of contemporary international debate. The aim of this paper is to explore the genesis of the account of creativity as economic and cultural freedom, and to consider how this discourse informed education policy prior to the 'Great Recession' (Streeck, 2011), and how the discourse of employability may come to replace it.

Key words: creativity; neoliberalism; employability

Introduction

When UK Prime Minister Tony Blair unveiled Creative Partnerships in 2001 as England's 'flagship creative learning programme', he talked of giving English children the 'freedom' to develop their creative talent; the need to 'free' our best artists; the provision of 'free' access

to national museums; cultural institutions being 'freed' from bureaucratic controls, and the 'freedom' for everyone to enjoy culture and creativity (Blair, 2001a: 3). Blair's avouched belief that 'the arts and creativity set us free' (2001a:3) went hand-in-hand with his faith in global free market capitalism, and in his address to the nation that announced the 2001 UK general election, Blair praised his party's economic record, declaring, 'This is the time, and ours is the task, to set your talents free and build a land of hope and opportunity for all' (Blair, 2001b). Blair's decision to embrace the notion of creativity as economic and cultural freedom, and to promote creativity in English schools via schemes such as Creative Partnerships, was part of an international fascination with innovation and free enterprise at the dawn of the new millennium. This fascination was displayed in slogans such as 'Creativity is our hope', an emotive claim put forward by UNESCO at its first World Conference on Arts Education in 2006, which was attended by 1200 participants from 97 member states across the globe (UNESCO, 2006:5). Clearly, international consensus had been established over the significance of creativity and its relationship with freedom, which made 'being creative' something to which all people, in all places, aspired. But how, and why, had this occurred?

The aim of this paper is to explore the origin of the account of creativity as economic and cultural freedom, and to consider why this discourse gained universal support. It begins by offering a brief history of the USA's instigation of creativity research as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War, and considers how the discourse of creativity was appropriated by neoliberals and incorporated into their account of the relationship between freedom and prosperity. The paper then considers how creativity was used to reconcile individuals to neoliberal global capitalism in the post-Cold War era, in particular through education policy. It concludes by considering the impact of the global economic downturn on the discourse of creativity, and how the discourse of employability looks set to take over creativity's role as the means to promote neoliberal economic policy through education.

The Cold War: creativity as a bulwark against communism

In 1950, J.P. Guilford gave a presidential address to the American Psychological Association which is widely held to have launched the scientific study of creativity (Baer & Kaufman, 2006). Guildford's (1950) theory that creativity is the product of a number of different mental abilities, which can be measured and explored through factor analysis, had developed out of his study of World War II pilots' failure rate. Retaining a military outlook, Guilford

positioned creativity research as vital to America's success in the Cold War scientific-technological competition with the USSR, and he cited the emerging space-age as justification for the identification and acceleration of creative minds who might serve his nation's interests (Wallner, 1995: 257). For Guilford, the failure to remove barriers to the development of creativity in American society jeopardised the very future of that society (Wallner, 1995: 263), and the desire to preserve the American way of life in the face of communism was, therefore, fundamental to this nascent research into creativity. In the same year as Guilford's address, the US government established the National Science Foundation, to 'secure the national defense' (NSF, 2011), and this investment in scientific research was underpinned by the realisation that America was unable to match the communist countries in 'sheer numbers of adequately trained scientists' (Mullins, 1960: 144). In this regard, the concept of creativity offered Americans hope: at a US military symposium in 1960, researchers claimed that creativity may be thought of 'as some sort of personality overlay on one's abilities and skills', which enables the individual 'to achieve novel restructuring of his knowledge' (Mullins, 1960: 145). The suggestion that this personality overlay was available to Americans, living in the 'land of the free', and unavailable to communists, living under ideological and political oppression, seemed to tip the scales of power in favour of the USA (Mullins, 1960). In spite of the high-tech, space-age nature of the Cold War competition, the idea that Americans were uniquely free to think 'new thoughts', and that to think 'new thoughts' was characteristically American, was an age-old belief that dated back to the nation's infancy (Crèvecoeur, 1759, in Nevis & Commager, 1954: 29). Famously, the Colonists' victory in the American War of Independence had resulted in the 'Blessings of Liberty' being enshrined in the 1787 Constitution of the United States. The supposition that America's Cold War victory was likewise dependent upon 'a handful of men with a rare gift of creativity' (Mullins, 1960: 144) therefore carried echoes of the nation's first heroic struggle for liberty, and seemed to promise an equally successful outcome.

The identification of positive American traits that might act as a bulwark to communism was, however, accompanied by anxiety over the fragility of such traits. Since the 1930s, the House Un-American Activities Committee had investigated subversive activities, and hysteria over the corrosive influence of communism on the American way of life reached its zenith with the McCarthy hearings of 1953 and 1954, when over 500 witnesses were interrogated about possible communist espionage and infiltration in the US government and military (United States Senate, 2011). Such ideological witch-hunts were accompanied by fear that Marxism

might inspire popular uprisings in the USA, and politicians were therefore reluctant to create unemployment during the 1950s and 1960s (Harvey, 2010 a: 280). Indeed, President Eisenhower adopted Keynesian countercyclical policies when the economy faltered, and in 1953 created a Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Jones, 1988: 534). Although interventionism may have been a logical response to the threat of communism, it was at odds with the traditional theory of the relationship between freedom and ingenuity, and appeared to disregard the 'Blessings of Liberty' upon which the nation had been founded. Uncertainty over the correct response to the threat of communism was deepened by the Soviets' launch of the satellite *Sputnik* in 1957, which seemed to mark the nightfall of America's unparalleled technological greatness (Jones, 1988: 535), and the national consternation over *Sputnik* contrasted gloomily with the golden dawn of the USA as the Enlightenment land of liberty and ingenuity. Efforts were made to address the 'intellectual flabbiness and enervation' of the American high-school curriculum in the wake of *Sputnik* (Jones, 1988: 588), and, as stated previously, the military looked towards creativity research to maintain its competitive edge. Nevertheless, some Americans felt that the decision to embrace 'un-American' Keynesian policy to avoid social dissent had catastrophically weakened the nation, and indeed placed it on *The Road to Serfdom,* as forewarned by the economist Friedrich von Hayek (1944).

Neoliberalism: creativity and the free reign of self-interest

Enlightenment figures such as Edward Gibbon had praised freedom as 'the happy parent of taste and science' (Gibbon, 2009: 29), and this creed found support amongst a number of Cold War economists, historians and philosophers, who looked back to the eighteenth century to find an alternative to Keynesianism that honoured the virtues of liberty and ingenuity. In 1947, Professor Hayek of the University of Chicago invited 36 scholars to meet at Mont Pelerin, Switzerland, to discuss the future of liberalism, and the resultant Mont Pelerin Society was one of a number of right-wing think tanks and foundations that emerged in the post-war era. A central concern of these "neo-liberals", both in Europe and the USA, was to understand the 'totalitarian tendencies' that had given rise to fascism and communism in recent years, in order to safeguard freedom (Friedrich, 1955: 519). Reasserting the classical liberal belief in the human as a 'sociable being with basically cooperative propensities' (Friedrich, 1955: 519), the neoliberals rejected the socialists' trust in the 'Father State', and sought to legally define the 'proper limits' between government and society that would enable individuals to flourish (Friedrich, 1955: 525). Despite having expressed initial faith in humankind's tendency to promote the greater good when not impeded by government, the

neoliberals' philosophy quickly darkened into a more cynical view of society. In the year following Hayek's assembly at Mont Pelerin, John Nash began work at Princeton, and his theory of non-cooperative games and *Nash equilibria* (Harsanyi, 1994: 165) challenged liberal assumptions about 'cooperative propensities', and laid the foundation for a more pessimistic view of the individual as inherently selfish. Nash's game theory intrigued members of the Mont Pelerin Society, including the economist James Buchanan (1965), who published his 'club theory' to explain voluntary cooperative behaviour amongst self-interested parties. Drawing upon *Nash equilibria,* Buchanan posited clubs as a 'private, nongovernmental alternative' for the provision of public goods (Sandler & Tschirhart, 1997: 336), and Buchanan's theory on public choice likewise challenged the role of the State in human affairs by calling into question the possibility of altruistic political action (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). By combining Adam Smith's (1995: 509) Enlightenment theory of the 'invisible hand' of the market with more recent game theory, the neoliberals formulated the claim that a self-regulating, and therefore inherently stable, 'market utopia' would emerge spontaneously through selfish interaction, provided that the State did not intervene (Hill & Myatt, 2010). If not quite paradise, this market utopia was, for the neoliberals, the best of all possible worlds for self-interested individuals.

Although some neoliberal policy was implemented in the USA during the late 1970s, it was Ronald Reagan's election as President in 1980 that ushered in the formal period of US neoliberal economic policy domination (Harvey, 2007). Reagan's decision to encourage the pursuit of self-interest through privatisation, deregulation and low taxation was broadly welcomed, and seemed to produce a change in people's attitudes towards 'independence and money' that was admired by academics such as John Kao (1989: 94) of Harvard Business School. Believing that the 'rebel or truth seeker of the 1960s' had become 'the entrepreneur of the 1980s' (Kao, 1989: xi), Harvard sponsored its first conference on entrepreneurship in 1983, in order to discuss how entrepreneurialism might be researched and taught. From the outset, academics and practitioners expressed the opinion that the entrepreneurial qualities of independence, self-determination and initiative were 'as American as apple pie' (Kao, 1989: 93-4), and Reagan's economic policy was thus heralded as the reassertion of the "American" traits of freedom and creativity. Under Reagan, economic interventionism was repudiated in language that drew upon the Cold War discourse of freedom and creativity. Thus, business experts justified the dismantling of mechanisms for the protection of workers, claiming that it was 'important to foster the development of a corporate culture supportive of creativity, the

freedom to question, and the freedom to fail' (Kao, 1989: 23). Management gurus welcomed deregulation, calling upon the findings of creativity research to castigate bureaucracy as 'the scourge of creativity' and to demonise the belief that 'the administration of the country's institutions is capable of dealing with every conceivable eventuality in a methodical fashion' (Majaro, 1992: 84). President Regan himself encouraged the conflation of creativity with freedom and prosperity, proclaiming:

> Only when the human spirit is allowed to invent and create, only when individuals are given a personal stake in deciding economic policies and benefiting from their success -- only then can societies remain economically alive, dynamic, prosperous, progressive and free. (Reagan, 1981)

In positing the free reign of *self-interest* as the font of industry and economic stability, the Cold War neoliberals provided the theoretical basis for the study of creativity as a means, not merely to resist communism through technological supremacy, but to promote a model of capitalism that seemed to honour the traditional American virtues of freedom and ingenuity. The speed with which Cold War creativity research was colonised by free market fundamentalists in the Reagan era is astonishing: in their survey of creativity research, Baer and Kaufman (2006: 18-19) found that in the period 1967-1976, 'organizational creativity' was a 'fairly minor topic', but that from the late 1970s onwards there was an explosion of research into how to identify creative workers and best utilise them within an organisation, how to use organisational factors to nurture creativity performance, and how to make 'deliberate efforts to train workers to become more creative' (ibid). By the early 1990s, American corporations were budgeting millions of dollars for creativity training programmes (Cropley, 2010: 157).

The post-Cold War era: creativity as a means to reconcile individuals to neoliberalism

On 9th November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down, and in 1991 the Cold War came to a dramatic end with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The US military was keen to credit the arms race for the collapse of communism, but the financial burden of the Soviets' techno-scientific competition with the USA was only one aspect of the economic crisis that broke the USSR (Toporowski, 2005). During the 1970s, countries such as Poland and Hungary had borrowed heavily from the capitalist West in an effort to improve the standard of living, and when the 1973 oil crisis pushed up interest rates, these countries were forced to restructure

their debt (Toporowski, 2005: 216). By the late 1980s, the USSR was obliged to secure fiscal support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a bastion of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007). Thus, in the words of Jan Toporowski (2005: 216), 'neoliberalism in eastern Europe was born'. It was no doubt irresistible for the West to contrast the 'arrogance of the original conception' of worldwide Marxist revolution with the failure of communism as an economic system (Keegan, 1993: 67). Some economists, such as William Keegan (1993), cautioned against hubris, pointing out that Western free market fundamentalism might de-stabilise capitalism in the post-Cold War era, but such warnings were largely ignored. In 1991 the Maastricht agreement established a broadly neoliberal framework for the internal organisation of the member states of the European Community (Harvey, 2007: 89), and in 1992 the Maastricht Treaty created the European Union, and led to the establishment of the single European currency. Meanwhile, Eastern European states attempted to emulate the prosperity of the USA by aggressively pursuing neoliberal economic policy (Toporowski, 2005). The winners and losers of the Cold War thus staked their fortunes on the success of neoliberalism.

While the neoliberals appeared to have won the economic battle, the cultural victory was less certain. In 1992, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) established an independent World Commission on Culture and Development. The aim was to prepare a report on the relationship between culture and economic development in a world freshly liberated from the Cold War's 'bipolar order' (UNESCO, 1996: 9). The ensuing report, *Our Creative Diversity* (UNESCO, 1996), placed creativity firmly at the centre of international policy on how to reconcile citizens to the cultural homogeneity of the "one world" system of global capitalism, which had seemingly triumphed over communism and thereby broken the longstanding cultural plurality that arose from the capitalism/communism binary. This was, the report claimed, a 'world full of the promise and opportunity of newly unlocked doors' (UNESCO, 1996: 9). At first, the widespread implementation of neoliberalism in this 'unlocked' world seemed to deliver economic benefits, as labour deregulation and increased capital mobility produced economic growth in countries in Europe and beyond. This growth, however welcome, carried a human cost: economic migrants from poor nations were vilified for taking jobs in more prosperous regions and disrupting indigenous culture, and the economic pressure to abandon regional identities in favour of a global monoculture created tensions within developing nations (Ward & Newton, 2012).

Recognising that the cultural risks of globalisation had not been resolved by the policy recommendations of previous reports, UNESCO held a World Conference on Arts Education in 2006, entitled 'Building Creative Competencies for the 21st Century'. The authors of the conference *Working Document* acknowledged, once again, that in order for economic integration to be peaceful it must involve the recognition of cultural heterogeneity. The problem was that culture has the 'ability to both unite and divide' (UNESCO, 2006: 39), as witnessed by numerous conflicts based on cultural differences. Creativity appeared to offer a way out of this impasse. By positioning creativity as the fountainhead of cultural production, creativity researchers such as Simonton (2006) provided a rationale for the promotion of creativity as a means to celebrate indigenous cultural artefacts as an expression of *universal* human intelligence, rather than the embodiment of local beliefs and values. According to this argument, cultural diversity is the end product of our common generative capacity, and the development of one-world capitalism may therefore be said to complement this recognition of our shared humanity. In practice, however, the promotion of creativity in education did not deliver the promised results. In a study of the implementation of creativity in education in East Asia, Africa and the Arab states, Ward and Newton (2012) found that it was often difficult, or impossible, to use the discourse of creativity to reconcile cultural heritage to the perceived demands of globalisation, as this discourse tended to displace local tradition. In particular, the authors found that in some African nations the rhetoric of creativity had become entangled with the disjunction between 'old-fashioned' indigenous culture and 'modern' Western culture, leading these nations to marginalise local culture in the classroom in an attempt to embrace 'proper' Western creativity (Ward & Newton, 2012: 124). Far from preserving indigenous culture in the face of globalisation, education policy based on the cultivation of creativity entrenched the Western monoculture and risked further undermining cultural heterogeneity. Sceptics, of course, might argue that this was the true purpose of the promotion of creativity in developing nations.

The need to get everyone to 'think in agreement' with neoliberalism was not confined to the developing world. Under the sub-heading 'Creativity in politics and governance', UNESCO (1996) delivered a homily on Western governance that could have been lifted straight from a neoliberal manifesto:

> The nurturing of collective creativity also means finding ways of helping people to create new and better ways of living and working together. Our social and political imagination has not kept pace with our scientific and technological imagination. It has been said that central government, which has usurped more and more power for itself, has become too small for the big things and too big for the small things. Deregulation of certain functions downwards and of others upwards could greatly improve the way we live together and resolve contentious issues. There is a need to better explore methods and procedures such as deregulation of authority and decentralization in ways that promote access to voice and power. (UNESCO, 1996: 24)

By appealing to the claims about creativity put forward by business experts such as John Kao (as discussed earlier), UNESCO was able to tap into the idea that 'creativity is latent in most collective situations', and that 'the extent to which it is fully expressed determines whether a group reaches the fulfilment of its goals' (Kao, 1989: 20). The collective situation of socialism might, it seemed, morph into the collective expression of radical individualism, if liberated through the development of 'natural' free markets (Palley, 2005: 22). Western politicians had already signed up to the principles of free market fundamentalism: all that remained was to convince the populace that neoliberalism would enable them to fulfil their goals. As seen below in an example from the UK, the discourse of creativity proved useful to politicians seeking to carry out this agenda.

Creative Partnerships: an example of the discourse of creativity at work politically

Within the UK, the post-war settlement was underpinned by the Marxist belief that the elimination of inequalities must entail a restructuring of the relations of production (Neelands *et al*, 2006: 99). This restructuring was an anathema to "freedom loving" neoliberals, yet socialist policies such as the nationalisation of industry and the maintenance of full employment had delivered obvious economic benefits to poorer people in the UK. This raised a problem: how might neoliberal politicians persuade UK citizens to abandon the mechanisms that had enhanced social justice through the redistribution of wealth? During the 1990s, reports such as *The Creative City* by Landry and Bianchini (1995) had helped popularise the idea that creative communities are socially and economically strong. As a result, the discourse of creativity offered politicians a ready means to persuade citizens that neoliberalism offered them a better deal than Keynesian interventionism. In 1998, the UK Labour government duly established a committee to make recommendations on the 'creative and cultural development of young people through formal and informal education' (NACCCE, 1999: 4). The ensuing report led to the establishment, in 2002, of Creative

Partnerships: an arts-based education programme that aimed to transform the aspirations of young people living in socially and economically deprived areas of England. Instead of creating jobs for young people in post-industrial regions blighted by high inter-generational unemployment, Labour chose to offer underprivileged pupils activities such as dance classes and mural painting (Jowell, 2002). The rationale offered by the government was that 'the arts and creativity can play an important part in tackling disaffection and alienation' (DCMS, 2001: 21), and enable pupils to 'take responsibility' for their lives (Jowell, 2002). These claims are perhaps incomprehensible, until placed in the context of neoliberal thinking. According to rational choice theory, we are all free to make the most of our talents, and the purpose of supplementary programmes such as Creative Partnerships is twofold. First, these programmes guarantee that talent-maximisation is equitable; second, they absolve society of responsibility for the welfare of individuals who do not succeed: if a pupil chooses to live his adult life on the margins of society after taking part in educational programmes designed to maximise the utility of his education, then that lifestyle is simply his preference. Educationalists such as Neelands and Choe (2010: 300) pointed out that the 'English model of creativity' was placing too much emphasis on an 'unconditional and egalitarian faith in human agency' that was 'increasingly distanced from a pro-social creative consciousness', and there was mounting concern that Labour's promotion of creativity was unfairly positioning deprived young people as architects of their own fortunes (see for example, Miles, 2007; Jones & Thomson, 2008). However, the plethora of positive claims about creativity, for example that it promotes a 'can-do attitude' (Sternberg, 1996: 20), blinded many to the insidious nature of educational schemes such as Creative Partnerships. Furthermore, the apparent strength of the UK economy seemed to validate neoliberal policy. Thus, Creative Partnerships was greeted with enthusiasm by teachers, parents and pupils in the poorest areas of England, who had the most to lose from the abandonment of socialism.

The political rhetoric of creativity as a means to "empower" individuals by equipping them with the competencies demanded by the knowledge economy is symptomatic of what Hardt and Negri (2009: 141) identify as the current tendency to talk about 'externalities' as a means to understand the increase and decrease of the value of biopolitical production. Using the example of real estate, Hardt and Negri (2009: 156) demonstrate how the value of a house is bound up with externalities that may be negative (e.g. noise pollution from a motorway) or positive (e.g. proximity to a good school). 'Location' becomes a proxy for access to what is common wealth, such as 'the quality of neighbourhood relations, the pathways of

communication, the intellectual and cultural dynamics', and real estate agents are thus able to capitalise on phenomena that are external to the building being sold (Hardt & Negri, 2009: 156). According to Hardt and Negri (2009: 141), capital is increasingly external to the productive process and the generation of wealth, yet human creativity (which is ostensibly bound up with contemporary wealth generation) is not positioned as part of the 'common wealth' that may benefit us all, but is instead conceptualised as an externality to be appropriated by capital. Under this economic model, an education system that produces creative individuals is a positive externality for corporations who seek to procure private gain from the common wealth of education by hiring innovative and resourceful staff who will give them a competitive advantage in the local or global market. Consistent with this agenda, the development of personal creativity is positioned within education as a means to equip individuals to compete for employment in the neoliberal market society for personal gain. Not surprisingly, the conceptualisation of "education for creativity" as a positive externality makes it difficult for individuals to resist the privatisation of the products of human creativity.

The Great Recession

In 2008, the collapse of the American financial system triggered the most damaging international recession since the 1930s. The deregulation of financial services was identified by many as the root cause of this crisis (see for example, Tett, 2009; Harvey, 2010 b), while others suggested that it had been precipitated by the 'expansion and consolidation of the networks of institutional linkages that sustained the imperial power of American finance' (Panitch & Konings, 2009: 68). Whether through deregulation or institutional linkages, one thing was certain: neoliberal economic policy had caused the 'mother of all crises' (Harvey, 2010 b: 6). Ironically, the economists at the Royal Academy concluded that the 2008 banking crisis, born of the neoliberal celebration of freedom and ingenuity, 'was principally a failure of the collective imagination of many bright young people, both in this country and internationally, to understand the risks to the system as a whole' (Harvey, 2010 b: 235). Evidently, the crisis was *not* created by 'bright young people' getting in a muddle: it had been forty years in the making (Coggan, 2011) and was, perhaps, the foreseeable outcome of economic policy based upon faith in the utility of self interest. Of course, the impact of the global economic downturn was not felt evenly: while bankers continued to receive huge bonuses from banks bailed out by the taxpayer, the neoliberal experiment had dire consequences for ordinary people. In 2012 it was reported that 46 million Americans were

living below the poverty line (McGreal, 2012), while in Greece food was being distributed by volunteers to children, the elderly and the homeless in a desperate attempt to avert malnutrition (Hope, 2012).

This paper has attempted to show that the discourse of creativity developed in tandem with the discourse of neoliberalism, and must therefore be subjected to the same scrutiny as that economic theory. Thorne (1965: 1) describes the twentieth century as the 'age of political dogma, imperfectly understood, frequently anachronistic, and for these reasons uttered all the more vehemently'. Arguably, neoliberalism is one such example of vehement dogma: during the Cold War the "new liberals" attempted to forestall totalitarianism through a revival of old-fashioned classical economic theory, spiced up through the insertion of new fangled economic psychology and cloaked in language derived from space-age creativity research. It is no coincidence that the implementation of neoliberal policy occurred alongside an explosion of interest in creativity research: arguably neoliberalism could not have thrived without the rhetoric of creativity offered by academics. According to Foucault (1994: 343; 2009), institutions play an important role in the establishment of power relations in society, but the 'anchorage' of power relations is ultimately found *outside*, in the plurality of discourse formations (e.g. the World Bank has the power to make loan covenants, but the validity of covenants is determined by members of society). By claiming that 'Creative people tend to be self-directed' and 'find bureaucratic limitations or the exercise of control by managers very frustrating' (West, 1997: 6), creativity researchers helped legitimise the abandonment of mechanisms that had guaranteed workers' protection, such as labour regulation. By claiming that entrepreneurs are the 'new cultural heroes' (Kao, 1989: 92), and that creative people have a 'can-do attitude' (Sternberg, 1996: 20), creativity researchers helped legitimise the denigration of the unemployed as doltish masters of their own destiny, when previously it had been considered a primary function of government to seek to secure full employment and a minimum standard of living for all.

Although this paper has argued that creativity researchers have contributed to the construction of a neoliberal discourse of creativity that has helped legitimise the privatisation of the common wealth (Hardt & Negri, 2009) and erode mechanisms designed to enhance social justice, it is unlikely that creativity will remain the favourite means to make popular the idea that education should serve the interests of capital. Within the UK, the austerity measures imposed in the wake of the 2008 crash have created a climate favourable to a

harsher discourse around skills acquisition that places less emphasis on originality and freedom and instead promotes compliance with the overt demands of industry. This new discourse of 'employability' is discussed below.

Employability: the heir to creativity?

In 2010 the UK Coalition government published a White Paper on the future of higher education, *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011), in which it revealed its intention to raise tuition fees and create an education marketplace. This neoliberal commodification of education is not supported in BIS (2011) through the discourse of creativity, which has been silently cast off by neoliberals like an old skin. Instead, the idea that it is equitable for students to become yoked with a lifetime of debt has been promoted via the discourse of employability. The word 'employability' was originally coined at the beginning of the twentieth century as a term to denote issues facing the long-term unemployed, marginalised or 'difficult to place' (Gazier, 1999; Feintuch, 1955), and as such is less charismatic than the term "creativity". Indeed, it is perhaps difficult to comprehend the appeal of a term used to identify the "up-skilling" of socially disadvantaged "misfits", yet employability is now held to be the defining practical and personal attribute of all graduates, and looks likely to eclipse creativity in its alleged utility. Under the vision of employability, the task of higher education is reformulated so that the ambiguities of "graduateness" are removed. Instead of the ineffable and unaccountable returns of old university practices, the modern university's function is clear: it must help students develop the 'skills, understandings and personal attributes' that will make them 'more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations' (Yorke, 2006: 8); equip students with the skills that 'industry needs', and provide them with 'the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market' (Hillage & Pollard 1998: 2). To facilitate this process, the university must deliver on a list of responsibilities: it must improve links with business; pay close attention to trends in employers' demands; identify the courses that employers value; work with employers to co-design, accredit or kite-mark courses, and through consultation develop a learning framework for students which will allow them to acquire the social and practical skills that will make them economically valuable (BIS, 2011). Not only must the modern university serve the employability agenda, it must demonstrate its *commitment* to this agenda through its mission statement, teaching and learning strategy, validation process, graduate data, and delivery of course content (BIS, 2011). The discourse of employability is starkly utilitarian, and arguably in keeping with the zeitgeist of austerity, yet it shares common ground with the more

colourful, pre-recession discourse of creativity, as both celebrate 'soft' or generic skills and position the individual as master of his/her own destiny. Creativity and employability thus serve the same neoliberal agenda to promote individualism over collectivism; private gain rather than the common wealth. In 2012, the Higher Education Academy offered UK academics thousands of pounds to entice them to conduct research into employability, and published an updated version of *Pedagogy for Employability* (Pegg *et al*, 2012). If we are to avoid complicity with the neoliberal agenda, which seeks to persuade ordinary people around the world to abandon socialist economic policy that works in the interests of the majority, in favour of neoliberal economic policy that works in the interests of the minority (Harvey, 2007), then we must learn to recognise, and critique, those discourses that attempt to reconcile people to their own subjugation.

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